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Adventure

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ARCH ADVENTURE

HARD GUYS
by THOMSON BURTIS

JOHNNY GURKHA
by PERRY ADAMS

The TRUE EXPERIENCE of PAUL SHEA

OF SPRINGFIELD, N.J.

I HATE TAKING THIS FACE ANYWHERE!

SURE WISH I COULD BACK OUT OF REHEARSAL TONIGHT—THESE PIMPLES LOOK FIERCE!
READ PAUL'S OWN STORY
C'MON FELLERS—LET'S TRY THAT OVER—YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE IT MORE ZIP IF WE'RE GOING TO GET THAT RADIO TRYOUT
S'POSE THAT MEANS ME—BET HE COULDN'T DO ANY BETTER IF HE HAD THE BIG BLOSSOM I'VE GOT BESIDE MY MOUTH—GOSH! IT HURTS EVERY TIME I BLOW A NOTE!

FOR GOODNESS SAKE PAUL—WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU LATELY—I NEVER KNEW YOU TO SIT AROUND HOME THIS WAY—DON'T YOU FEEL WELL?
OH—I'M ALL RIGHT MUM—ONLY, WELL—A GUY DOESN'T MUCH LIKE GOING AROUND WITH A PIMPLY FACE LIKE THIS!

I WONDER IF FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST WOULDN'T HELP YOU? I'M GOING TO GET YOU SOME—IT'S WHAT A SKIN DOCTOR TOLD LAURA TO EAT—AND SHE SAID IT WAS WONDERFUL
IT SURE IS WONDERFUL IF IT REALLY WORKS

LATER
ALL READY, SON? DAD SAYS HE'LL DRIVE US OVER TO THAT RADIO AUDITION
O.K.—SAY MUM—THOSE YEAST CAKES ARE THE STUFF ALL RIGHT—LOOK—THERE'S NOT A HICKIE LEFT—

PAUL, YOU WERE SWELL—I NEVER HEARD YOU PLAY BETTER
THANKS—I TRIED MY DARNDEST—GEE—I SURE HOPE WE SOUNDED ALL RIGHT IN THAT MIKE
STUDIO

"THE WAY I LOOKED BEFORE I took Fleischmann's Yeast. I hated going anywhere, my face was so broken out."

PAUL NOW—PIMPLES GONE "Fleischmann's Yeast sure cleared up my skin fine," he says.

a fellow feels pretty low about having to go around when his face is all broken out with mean looking pimples. I got so I hated to be seen.

Lately I'm mighty glad to tell others about what a swell pimple chaser Fleischmann's Yeast is. Every boy that wants to get rid of pimples ought to eat it.

Paul Shea

Clears up Adolescent Pimples

AFTER the start of adolescence, from about 13 to 25, important glands develop. This disturbs the body. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin and pimples appear.

Fleischmann's Yeast helps clear up pimples by clearing these skin irritants out of the blood. Then—pimples go!

Eat 3 cakes a day—a cake about ½ hour before each meal—plain, or in a little water.

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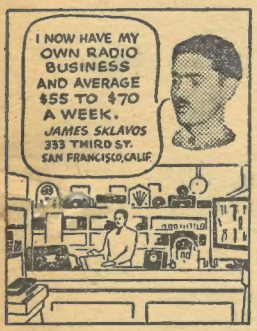

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National Radio Institute, Dept. 7CS9
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Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 96, No. 5 for March, 1937 Published Once a Month

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Hell for a Guinea . . . . . H. BEDFORD-JONES 28
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Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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Well of the Padres His Living Tomb

San Diego Reporter, Weak from Loss of Blood, Cheats Death in Ancient Shaft

"For nearly two hundred years this death-trap had awaited its human prey... that was the grisly thought uppermost in my mind, as I fought for life in the ancient crumbling mission well of San Diego de Alcala," writes E. P. Lyle III.

"First, as I was climbing down to explore an opening at the water level, a loose tile struck me on the head; then the rickety ladder slipped, plunged me dazed and bleeding into the water.

"But I had clung to my flashlight and as the cold water cleared my senses, I could see it shining under the surface. Paddling to keep afloat, I swung the light as best I could around the well. A rusted old pipe attached to the wall offered a hand hold, and was stout enough to hold me as I fought off growing dizziness from loss of blood, and climbed hand over hand to where my companions could reach me.

"They would have pulled a corpse out of that well if it hadn't been for the DATED Eveready batteries in my flashlight—batteries that were really *fresh* when I bought them months before. I would certainly have lost consciousness and drowned before my friends could have reached the mission (a quarter mile away) and returned with rope and a light."

E. P. Lyle III

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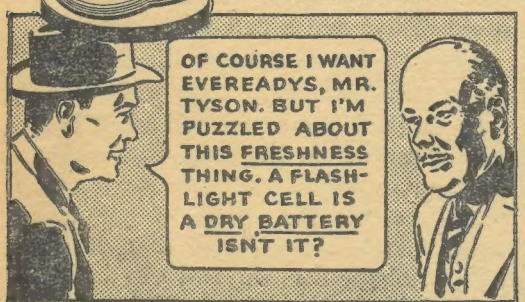
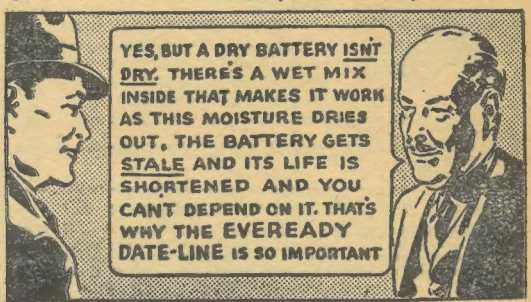
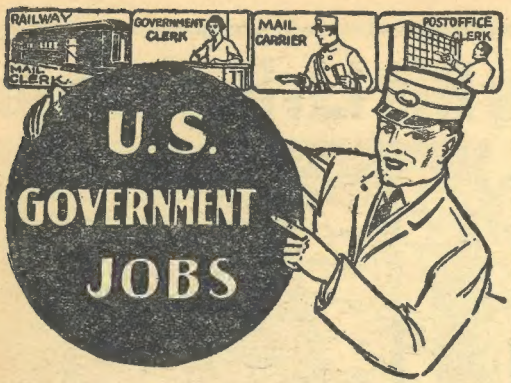



YES, BUT A DRY BATTERY ISN'T DRY. THERE'S A WET MIX INSIDE THAT MAKES IT WORK AS THIS MOISTURE DRIES OUT, THE BATTERY GETS STALE AND ITS LIFE IS SHORTENED AND YOU CAN'T DEPEND ON IT. THAT'S WHY THE EVEREADY DATE-LINE IS SO IMPORTANT



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MANY 1937 APPOINTMENTS

MEN, WOMEN

Railway Postal Clerks

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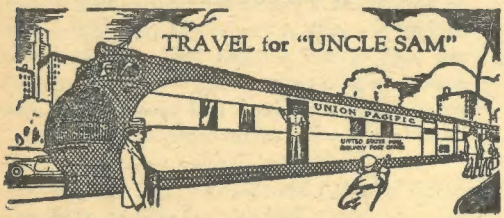

3 Days On—3 Days Off—Full Pay

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BATTLE WAGON

By Arthur Woodward

ON the morning of October 29, 1814, a strange craft christened the *Demologos,* slid down the ways and plumped into the East River. An odd bird of the seas, that vessel. She was really two ships fastened together by deck planking. In one side of the ship was a copper boiler for generating steam, in the other half was the machinery to make her go. She had no propeller. She had four rudders, two fore and two aft, in order that she might sail in either direction! Her construction engineer was Robert Fulton.

In England many wild stories were rife about this first steam monster of the seas.

According to one account her length was stated to be "300 feet, breadth 200 feet; thickness of her sides, 13 feet, of alternate oak, plank and corkwood; carries 44 guns, four of which are 100 pounders, can discharge 100 gallons of boiling water in a few minutes and by mechanics brandishes 300 cutlasses with the utmost regularity over her gunwales; works also, an equal number of pikes of great length, darting them from her sides with prodigious force."

The *Demologos,* alas, did not get into action. She did make two trial trips to sea in 1814 and achieved the miraculous speed of five and a half miles per hour.

After these two voyages she was tied up at Brooklyn Navy Yard until June, 1829. In that month, two and a half barrels of powder in her magazine caught fire and exploded, wrecking the vessel.

Thus ended the career of our first steam battle wagon—and even if she didn't sail the seas she had the distinction of being the grandmother of our mighty Pacific and Atlantic fleets, a worthy dame of an honorable progeny.

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If you, too, need these vital elements to aid in building you up, get these new "7-power" Ironized Yeast tablets from your druggist today. Note how quickly they increase your appetite, and help you get more benefit from the body-building foods that are so essential. Then, day after day, watch flat chest develop and skinny limbs round out to natural, hefty attractiveness. See better color and natural beauty come to your cheeks. Soon you feel like an entirely new person.

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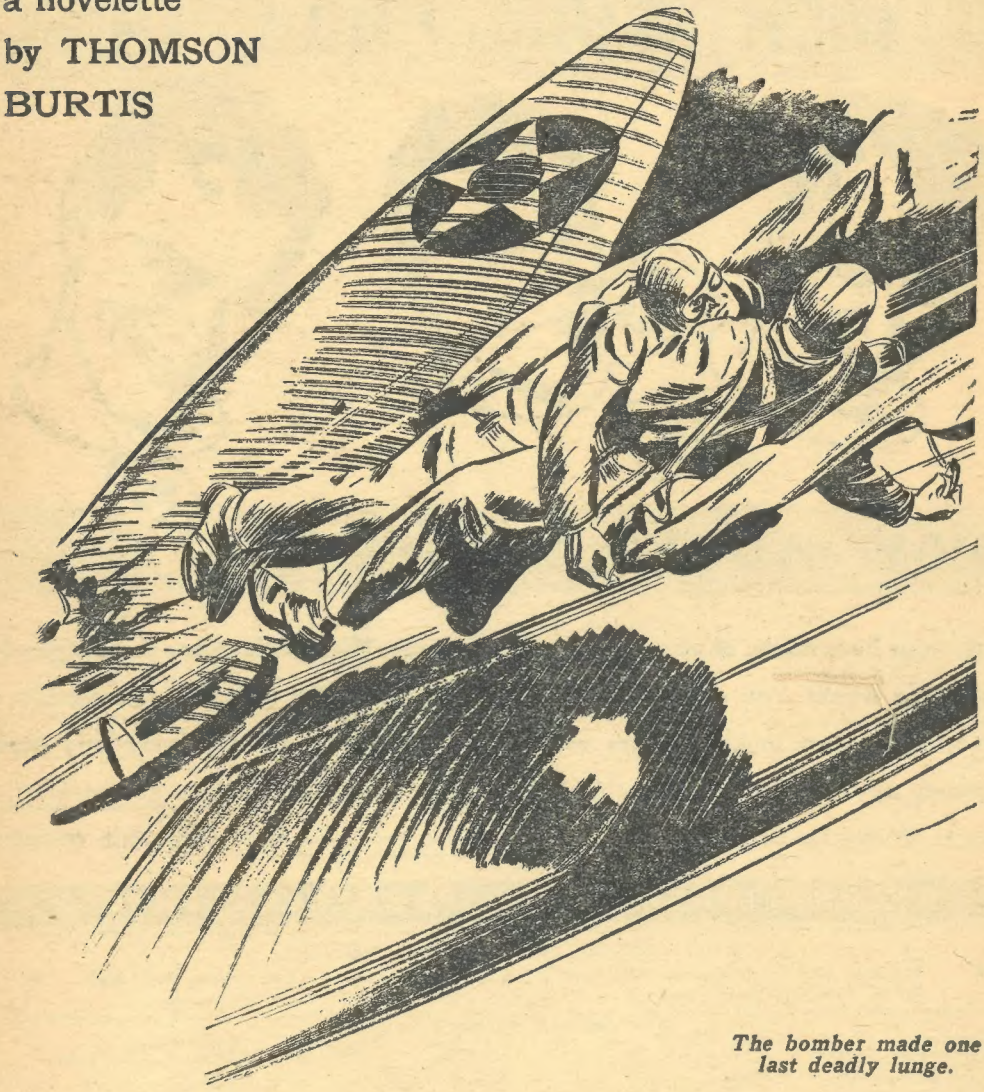
HARD GUYS

a novelette
by THOMSON BURTIS

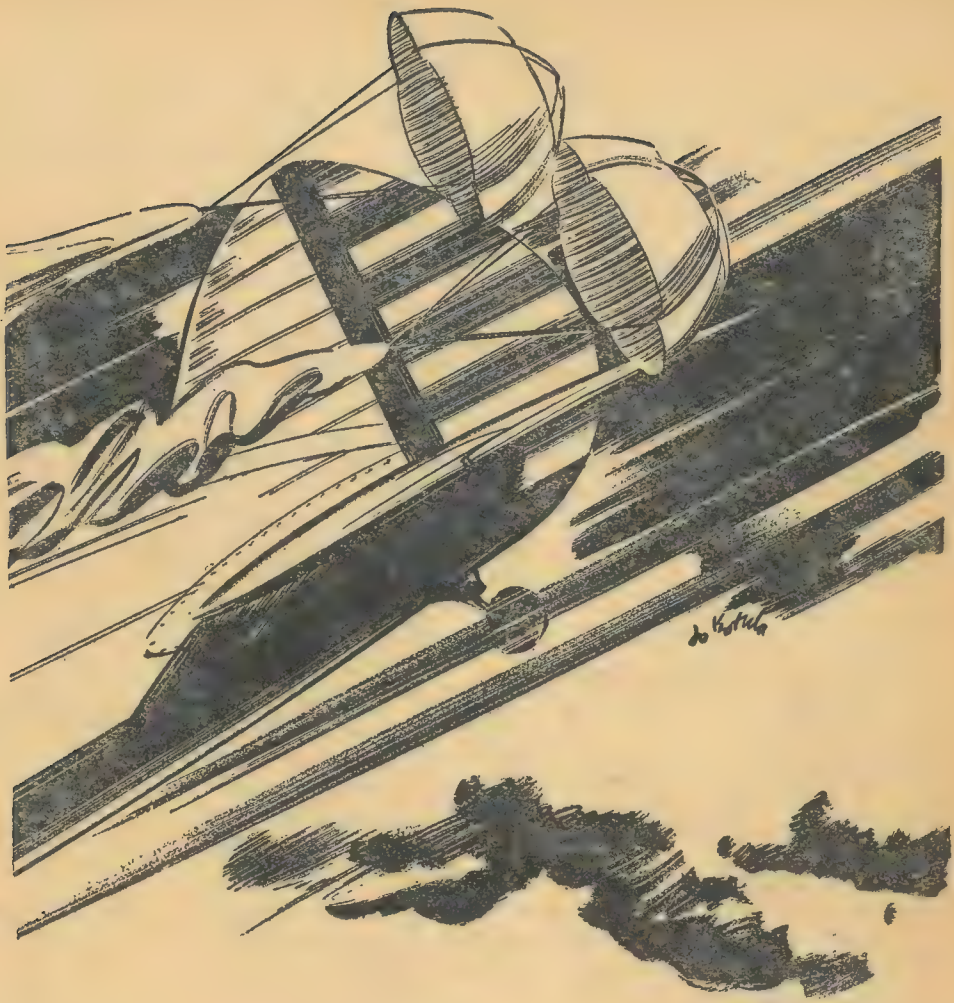


The bomber made one last deadly lunge.

THE five khaki-clad men in the office were silent, each wrapped in his separate thoughts. Occasionally one moved restlessly. The tension in the air was as obvious as the cigarette smoke which swirled slowly in the sunlight.

Craig rose abruptly and stood looking out the huge window which formed one side of the office. For the last half hour he had been chief test pilot of the United States Army Air Service. He was not thinking of that, however, as his shadowed eyes swept the panorama of Wright Field laid out below him.

His gaze came to rest on G-6, a twin-motored Grayson bomber which occupied the line in solitary glory. A freak-



ish thought went through the rangy young airman's mind. It was as though no other ship cared to be close to that shining monster which was like an outlaw stallion—beautiful to look at but deadly to approach.

Five Grayson bombers had killed three test pilots in the last two weeks.

Even that, however, was not important to Craig then. He was dreading what all the rest of them were dreading, from Colonel Barclay, the C. O., down to Tyson, newest recruit. From the day when tests had started on the Grayson, the nerves of every man on the field had started to fray. There were new lines on the faces of every one there. It seemed to Craig that right then, awaiting Leary, the test pilots were about to break. Craig himself would rather take G-6 up and try to spin it than face the old boy—

Halting footsteps became audible from the outside office. Craig turned from the window, bracing himself for the ordeal. When the door opened, however, he relaxed. It was only Professor Crane, wizard on aerodynamics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The spry little old man was accompanied by Waters, Chief Engineer of the Grayson Airplane Company. Waters was carrying a chamois bag.

Colonel Bailey got to his feet as he greeted Crane.

The others rose too, out of respect for the man who had been flying before the test pilots had soloed on velocipedes.

"May I sit behind the desk?" barked Crane.

"Sure, please," Craig said quickly before Colonel Bailey could answer.

That chair was the official throne of the chief test pilot. Craig had not cared to take it and somehow he had known what Captain Leary's attitude would have been had he come in to find it vacant.

Waters took a model of the Grayson from the bag and placed it on the desk.

"Are we all here?" snapped Crane as he eased himself into the chair.

"No," Colonel Bailey said quietly. "We must wait for Captain Leary."

"I thought he'd been taken off flying—"

"He has. And he's no longer chief test pilot," Bailey told him. "Nevertheless, we should not care to go on without him."

"I see," Crane said gruffly. "What's the trouble with him?"

"A high altitude test that went wrong —just about ruined him. He's no kid any more, you know. He'll never be able to fly again."

Again that strained silence fell over the room. Kaley, knobby-nosed, humorously homely, stripped the wrapper off a magazine he had been carrying. One of the great pilots of the world, Kaley had but one object in flying. That was to save money enough to buy what he called a real farm—not the kind he had known as a boy.

Craig gazed absently at the model on the desk. There were little weights hung all over it. Of course Professor Crane would solve the problem of the Grayson bomber. Craig had not spent four years at Massachusetts Institute of Technology on detached service from the Army without becoming acquainted with Crane's uncanny genius. He had a feeling for design as sure as the instinct of a great pilot in the air. Right now, though, the Grayson bomber was as unimportant to Craig as a manicure on the way to the electric chair.

Craig turned again to stare out the window. The sunlight deepened a certain golden-brownness about him: tan clothes, bronzed face, brownish-blond hair. The whites of his eyes were thrown into relief, framing steady gray pupils which had a curious distant quality. They seemed more the eyes of the Technology student than those of the pilot. Deep in them, however, sparks occasionally glinted through the smoky shutters —and served notice to the observant that quiet, thoughtful Lieutenant Craig had a large amount of fire smoldering beneath his controlled exterior.

Kaley had been looking at the photograph of a pensive prize-winning Hereford which adorned the cover of the farm weekly in his hand. He held it up for all to see.

"Boy! Is that a heifer or is that a heifer?" he exclaimed.

"I wish our private wild bull would get here and have it over with," Tyson drawled peevishly.

As though in answer to his prayer, heavy footsteps, punctuated by the click of a cane, lumbered across the outside office.

Craig turned from the window.

"Here he is," he said quietly. "I'd rather be shot."

THE tapping came closer, like the approach of some dreaded ghost. The door was flung wide, and the Gargantuan figure of Captain Terry Leary filled it to overflowing. His red eyes glared around the room.

There was a subtle effect of sloppiness in the way his uniform draped his massive body. He had evidently made a half-hearted effort to shave, but many

little clumps of hair had escaped him. He had reverted overnight to the top sergeant he had been in 1917. It was as though Captain Leary had disappeared along with his title—the title that had been the focal point of Leary's existence.

"Mornin," he grunted. "Sorry to be late."

His shaggy mane of black hair grew low over his forehead, and was now untidy. He was so homely that he was attractive—a lumbering, wounded ox of a man whom one could pity but never hate.

It was Tyson who tried to break the tension.

"Pretty soft for you," he grinned. "Quit any time you want to with an income for life."

"I'm going to put a ship in a ground loop myself," remarked Kaley, "and then go up to Doc Boswell's, miss all the letters on the chart, and retire at the government's expense."

Black's dark, sardonic face, like that of some jeering Mephistopheles, was almost gentle as he watched Leary sit down.

"Going to Europe when you retire?" he inquired. "Now if it was me, I'd give the girls in Paris a whirl first and then I'd go on to Germany and be a nudist."

Craig envied the ability of the others to say those things to Leary. But none of them had had to bear the contempt and animosity of the self-made old-timer for the young product of modern, highly specialized training. And no one of them had taken Leary's job. It was typical of Craig's mind that he did not think of the situation in terms of Leary versus Craig, but the old Army against the new.

"I'm getting to hell out of this lousy Army," Leary said savagely, "as soon as I know what to do with myself when I get out."

Craig forced himself to talk.

"Look at those eyes," he gibed. "Boy, was he cock-eyed last night!"

Hate stared out of Leary's red-rimmed eyes as they glinted briefly at Craig. Then he cut his successor dead.

"Well, let's get going," he barked—to the rest of the men.

For the moment he had forgotten that his five years as chief test pilot were over. As he remembered, his fleshy face flushed and his eyes dropped.

Colonel Bailey and Crane had been watching intently. Bailey flashed a look at Crane.

"Very well," the scientist cut in smoothly.

The center of attention shifted from Leary to Crane. There was a lump in the red-headed Craig's throat. Leary was one man who would never be the same again. He would always hate Craig, because Craig was a symbol which had suddenly become hateful. He forced himself to concentrate on what Crane was saying.

"Recapitulating our problem, gentlemen," Crane went on, as though the whole subject irritated him extremely, "the Grayson bomber is without question the greatest achievement of its type in airplane design up to the present time. Your own flying tests have proven that; my own wind tunnel and other experiments confirm your conclusions. That makes the conquering of its one fatal flaw important enough to the United States to risk a few more lives, if necessary—volunteer lives, of course. At least that is my opinion, and Washington concurs."

A CURIOUS change came over the faces of the four test pilots. Black's mouth was set but his eyes glinted with sardonic amusement. Kaley's rustic face looked as though he would have liked to have said "Oh, yeah?" Tyson's good-humored, freckled countenance was set, his eyes ablaze. He might have been visualizing himself as the sacrificial hero. Craig, master flyer of them all, seemed

to have sheathed himself in impenetrable armor. His face was a mask.

Colonel Bailey, eyeing them unobtrusively, saw one thing which was common to all those faces. That was the shadow which the ever-present, challenging menace of the Grayson had cast upon them.

"My wind tunnel experiments," Crane was saying, "confirm your flying tests. There is only one flaw in the Grayson. When it is put into a tailspin it can not be stopped from going into a flat spin, and when that happens it is beyond the skill of any pilot to get it out. In my opinion, conquering this flat spinning tendency of the Grayson can only be done by changing its center of gravity. A series of experiments have been devised by myself and Mr. Waters which we believe will indicate just where that center of gravity should be located."

Craig was leaning forward now. A slow fire was burning behind his eyes. He had been sent to Massachusetts Institute of Technology because he was almost as much scientist as flyer.

Crane held up the model.

"Dud bombs will be attached to actual Grayson bombers in the same manner as on this model," he said. "Each can be detached by a separate bomb release. You will observe that the bombs are hung below the fuselage, from nose to tail. Many tests must be made. The bomber and the pilot must ascertain the exact effect on a spinning ship of dropping every conceivable combination of bombs until a perfect weight distribution is achieved—and the Grayson is controllable in a spin."

He put the model down on the desk slowly. His keen old eyes, which needed no glasses, played over the quiet test pilots. They hesitated briefly on Leary. The ex-pilot was leaning forward, his beefy face crimson with excitement. He looked as though he was choking in an effort to remain silent. Crane's eyes shifted to Bailey. The chief engineer officer of the Army Air Service was way ahead of Crane, and the professor knew it. Nevertheless he spoke as though to Bailey.

"I wouldn't be surprised if it were necessary for these two men to put a dozen ships into that many flat spins," he said. "They may have to bail out any number of times before they finally hit on the proper weight distribution."

He stopped for a moment to let that sink in. An indefinite number of parachute jumps from a flat-spinning ship—and two of the three dead test pilots had been killed because their 'chutes had been fouled by an unmanageable, wildly threshing monster of the air.

After an interval Crane continued:

"The Grayson factory, with a huge Government contract at stake, has put at our disposal, free of charge, half a dozen Grayson ships, which will be completed within the week. The tests will be conducted at the factory."

"That's a great idea!" It was a vibrant bark, so loud that it was almost a shout, from Leary. He was on his feet, stumping up and down the office on his bad leg. "It's a swell idea, and I'm the guy that's going to sit up there and lay the eggs!"

"Why Captain—" Colonel Bailey started, but Leary could not be stopped.

"No buts, Colonel," he roared. "I'm just a super-annuated hulk, a has-been. But I was flying airplanes before these other guys ever saw a kite, and don't forget that!"

"BUT Terry," Colonel Bailey protested, "you've already done more than your share—"

"You gotta let me go, Colonel," Leary rushed on. "There ain't a man in the whole Air Service as eligible as me. Off flyin', can't see my hand in front of my face, huh? I'm not the chief test pilot any more. I'm no kind of a pilot, but I was one for twenty years." He was leaning over the colonel, fairly

shaking his fist in the suffering Bailey's face. "You gotta do this for me, Colonel! When you and the Doc busted me yesterday, you told me I could have anything in the Air Service I wanted. Do I get the job?"

"But your leg—"

"Damn the leg! It's just as good as it ever was, except for being a little stiff. Come on, Colonel, you just can't turn me down."

"Well," Bailey said hesitantly, "if you insist."

"That's that," roared Leary triumphantly. Using his cane as a pivot, he whirled to face Craig. "And, of course, there is only one guy here that's just what the doctor ordered for the pilot on these tests."

"Don't tell me you ain't game!"

His fierce eyes swept the circle. His mouth twisted.

"You know, boys, on account of his scientific education. I wonder if he's gonna volunteer?"

It was a challenge thrown directly into Craig's face; the challenge of one enemy to another. Every one there knew that, yet no one could speak. Craig was suddenly cool and nerveless. Not exactly nerveless, rather that rasped nerves had temporarily frozen. An incongruous thought occurred to him. Leary's language had suddenly become slurred and ungrammatical. The chief test pilot would never have allowed himself his youthful "aint's" and "seens."

"You learned a lot about designing these babies and all that up at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology," Leary rushed on. "Of course this'll be up in the wilds of the Great Lakes. There won't be anybody to watch. There will be just you and me, Cockroach. Don't tell me you ain't game."

"Captain!"

Colonel Bailey's voice was like a whip.

But the temporary madman that was Leary paid no attention.

"Come on, Cockroach," he gibed. "You're a natural! You know more about aerodynamics and all that stuff than all the rest of us put together. How about it, old boy, old boy?"

Craig stared briefly into Leary's bloodshot eyes. Then he said quietly:

"Sure."

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The other flyers looked at one another as Leary relaxed. It was Colonel Bailey who broke the silence. He was uncertain, as though feeling his way.

"I am not sure that we could spare you right now, Lieutenant," he said hesitantly.

Leary turned on him as though he was another enemy.

"We got along without him around here a long time, Colonel," he snarled.

"Captain! You forget yourself!"

Colonel Bailey was angry, but Leary was unabashed.

"I'm sorry," he said triumphantly.

"I want to go," Craig said slowly, "for a lot of reasons."

"Sure," Leary crowed. "The old chief test pilot and the new one, eh?"

"Right," Craig answered. "So with your permission, Colonel, I will assign myself and Captain Leary to the job."

The colonel, more than any one there, realized the importance and the hazards of the job—and he knew both men better than any one else. So there were many reasons why, despite his forebodings, he said:

"Very well. Orders will be issued tomorrow."

CHAPTER II

TEST CRUCIBLE

THREE days later Craig was pointing the nose of G-6 toward a huge sign three thousand feet below. The words "Grayson Aircraft Co." decorated the roofs of a half dozen buildings which sprawled along the edge of a sizeable flying field. The opposite boundary of the field was formed by a lake on which several models of the Grayson seaplanes were moored. Miles away a small city nestled in the sparse woods which covered the earth, except for lake and field, as far as the flyers could see. Tough country for parachute jumping, Craig thought.

Six ships were drawn up on the line like a reception committee. As the Grayson spiralled lower Craig could see the numbers on their sides: G-7, G-8, G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12.

Leary was leaning forward, his heavy face illumined by a sort of ferocious satisfaction. Was he gloating over the prospect of conquering those ships—or at the prospect of Craig being conquered by them? Suddenly to Craig the ships and the man beside him merged into one implacable enemy.

Craig taxied up alongside the fleet of planes, to find Chief Engineer Waters with hand extended.

"This is Mr. Grayson, Captain Leary and Lieutenant Craig," he said, and the flyers shook hands with the middle-aged, prematurely gray manufacturer. "This is Charlie Ryan, our test pilot."

"They fly all right with those weights on," Ryan told them.

He wore a pince-nez and looked more like an earnest young broker than a flyer.

Leary jerked his head at the ships.

"They're all ready to go?" he asked.

"All set," Ryan answered.

"Well, we're all set for flying," barked Leary. "How about making the first test right now, Cockroach?"

Mr. Grayson gazed at Leary in astonishment.

"My word, Captain. There's no necessity for—"

"No time like the present, eh, Cockroach?" Leary interrupted rudely. He grinned. "Let's start getting it over with. Come on. We'll take a peek at the machinery."

For a second Craig studied Leary's departing back. Then, without a word, he followed. The others trailed along, talking in low voices. Grayson's eyes were troubled, Ryan's understanding, as Waters told them what he had seen and heard at Wright Field.

A quick inspection showed that the bombs hung beneath the fuselage were numbered to correspond with separate bomb releases in the bomber's cockpit. Leary had a chart, made out by Professor Crane, indicating the exact bombs which were to be dropped on each test until the Grayson was conquered.

Leary was standing in the bomber's cockpit, ten feet above the ground. He looked down at Craig as he thrust Crane's diagram back into his coveralls.

"Everything shipshape," he stated. "Let's go, eh, Cockroach?"

Craig looked up at him. He didn't mind making the first test now, but suddenly he wondered whether he ever wanted to go into the air with Leary. That shaggy bear of a man, hands on the cowling, leaned forward. His malevolent face, thrust over the side, looked like that of some unshaven gargoyle.

"Why, Lieutenant," he jeered, "Are you feeling poorly this afternoon?"

Suddenly the set of his lips changed a little and the grin had become a snarl.

"Come on," he rasped. "Let's get going!"

"Okay," Craig said slowly.

It was an effort for him to say that. It was still more of an effort for him to control himself a half hour later. The Grayson was fifteen thousand feet high. Leary turned toward him and signaled his wonder as to whether Craig intended to reach the moon before he put the Grayson into its spin.

Craig gathered himself for the ordeal. He had watched four of the jinx ships crash and had jumped from the fifth one himself. He would have to jump from this one—that he knew. G-7 must not crash among the buildings so maneuvering over the field became an impossibility. That meant a perilous landing somewhere in the thin woods. What lay behind Leary's demoniac grin he could not tell—

Abruptly he jerked back on the stick and jammed on left rudder. The bomber arced upward, then fell off on its side in a spin. Leary dropped to the floor of the bomber's cockpit. The feel of the ship told Craig that two rear bombs had been released. Nevertheless, the spin was gradually flattening out.

HE looked over the side. He felt the ship lighten and the next instant four more bombs hurtled into his range of vision. And still the flat spin, from which no Grayson had ever been extricated, went on.

He was getting a little dizzy now as the ship spun as though its nose were fastened to a pivot. Leary was out of sight, crouching on the floor of the bomber's cockpit.

Craig cut the motor, thrust the stick all the way forward and gave the ship opposite rudder. The speed of the spin did not slacken. He tried the motor all the way on, then half way on, tried neutral rudder, neutral stick—every conceivable combination of motor and controls. Drumming his fingers on the cowling would have been just as effective.

Two more bombs left the ship, without result. Craig glanced at the ground through dazed eyes.

Three times the group of intent observers in front of the hangars whirled past him, as though they were spinning around the ship.

What in the name of God was Leary doing still down on the floor of the cockpit? Abruptly Craig realized that they were less than five thousand feet high. He loosened his safety belt, cut the motors; then, leaving the useless controls, he dropped to the floor of the pilot's cockpit. There was an opening between it and the bomber's cockpit. Leary was just jerking two more bombs loose, his free swinging observer's belt still clasped around his waist. Craig was being thrown from side to side as he shook Leary. Leary turned, his eyeballs wobbling back and forth crazily.

"We're low!" Craig yelled. "Jump!"

Leary took his time to stand up. Craig scrambled back into his seat. They were less than three thousand feet high now and that sickening spin, so much worse than the ordinary vertical tailspin, had him weak and groggy. For a moment Leary stood there. He seemed reluctant to leave the ship—to be looking downward as though the ground had a fascination for him.

A thought hit Craig with stunning force.

For that instant, at least, Leary was a man who wanted to die.

Then the huge roughneck came to himself. He thumbed his nose at the Grayson factory, moved arm and hand in a gesture of sublime contempt at the ship itself. Then, as though bored, he calmly dived over the side. He pulled his 'chute a little too quickly. The whirling tail surfaces missed the white silk by less than two feet.

Craig scrambled to the bomber's cockpit and got one foot on the cowling. He meant to take no chances. When he jumped, it was with a mighty shove of the legs to speed him out of the Grayson's range.

He waited a full five seconds before pulling his 'chute; five seconds of curious peace and calm. The quick gasp which he was never able to control when a parachute opened—a combination of relief and the jerk of downward speed being stopped abruptly—and he was swinging downward in sweeping arcs.

For a moment he forgot himself as he watched the Grayson, like some monster in its death agony, thresh earthward and crash in a mighty ball of flame. He saw Leary land in a clearing among the trees, rise to release his 'chute, and then fall again.

"Made that bad leg worse," Craig thought.

Then, for the first time, he awakened to the realization that looking after Rufus Craig was a very important matter.

He was drifting toward a thick clump of trees. He grasped the shroud lines and slipped the 'chute desperately in an attempt to break his horizontal drift and hit the clearing beside them. His speed seemed to be increasing by leaps and bounds as he came closer to the ground. He could not make it. Worse still, slipping the 'chute had increased his downward speed.

Ten feet above a tree he relaxed every muscle and threw his arms up before his face. He crashed squarely into the top of the towering oak. The next instant he was stunned as his head hit a limb.

He was mercifully unconscious as his body tore down through the branches, bouncing from limb to limb as limply as a rag doll. The 'chute snarled among the branches as his body hurtled free.

A second later, feet only inches from the ground, the bleeding, unconscious form of the Army's chief test pilot was swinging like a corpse suspended from the gallows.

CHAPTER III

"YOU'RE GOING TO FLY!"

THE goat-bearded doctor was completing an early morning inspection of the carpentry performed on Craig the afternoon before. That young gentleman was tastefully arrayed in pajama pants and bandages—the latter covering him far more completely, or at least thickly, than the former. In addition to swathings from waist to armpits, he was further garnished by a half dozen strips of adhesive tape on his face, which contrasted with half-healed cuts. Three bruises on his cheeks completed a caricature of the quietly comely young man who had landed the day before.

His arms were even worse. Literally

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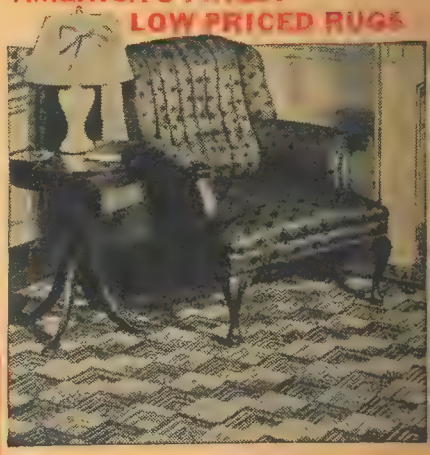

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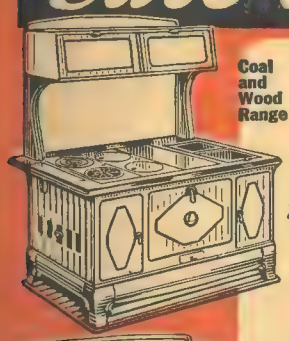

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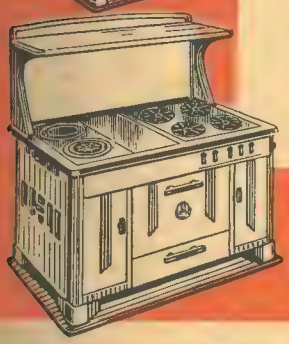

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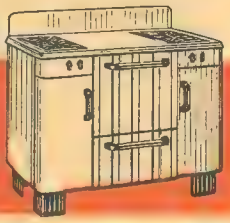

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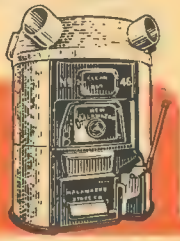

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dozens of cuts and scratches criss-crossed through huge blue-yellow splotches on his flesh.

He was reclining comfortably on a four-poster bed which was as old-fashioned as the rest of the furniture in the little frame house which had been set aside for the flyers' use.

"Everything seems to be all right," the doctor said cheerily as he started to replace Craig's pajama coat. "Those ribs will mend in no time. It's great to be young!"

Upon which cheery note Mr. Terrence Leary entered.

"Still lolling around in bed, huh?" was Leary's greeting. "You look healthy enough to me."

"That's more than I can say for you," Craig told him, which was no more than the exact truth.

It was not alone that his bad leg fairly dragged behind him. Leary's whole face seemed to have sagged. He looked ill and old, except for his eyes. And they were the eyes of a man so sick at heart that he had a spiritual fever.

"Good morning, Captain," said the doctor. "I was just leaving."

"You'd think a couple of broken ribs was a major operation," Leary said.

"Sometimes they are," the doctor said cheerily. "Good morning, gentlemen, I'll look in again this afternoon."

He departed as cheerily as he had come.

"Well, come on," rasped Leary, "Shag out of that bed and let's get going!"

"Not a chance," Craig told him. "I'm temporarily out of circulation."

"I thought so," sneered Leary. "Figured on using a couple of split spare ribs as an excuse to quit, were you? Well, it ain't going to work. Come on, get up out of there."

Had there ever been any doubts about the driving force behind Leary for the past few days, they would have been swept away then. He didn't care about the Grayson—he cared less than nothing about what happened to him. He was going to drive and flay and taunt the man he hated—break him, show him up, make him quit.

Craig knew that, now. Nevertheless, he forced himself to say lightly:

"Are you kidding?"

"I'm kidding on the level." Leary leaned forward. "Do you think that *you're* kidding *me?*"

"What do you mean?"

"You didn't want to come here in the first place until I kicked you into it, and now you're proving that you just haven't got the guts."

Danger signals were flying in Craig's eyes. For the first time in the endless days behind them, an edge crept into his voice.

"I've got guts enough to take my medicine standing up when it comes, without running around squawking and blaming other people for it," he said slowly.

"You don't say," the stung Leary retorted furiously. "You've been slipping out of everything that didn't hit the front page ever since you joined the Air Service, but you're not going to slip out of this. Get out of that bed. You're going to fly!"

"Right!"

That word seemed to be expelled from Craig like a rock tossed from a suddenly active volcano. He barely noticed the pain which shot through his chest as he swung his legs over the side of the bed and started ripping off his pajama coat.

"I'll fly you right into the ground, mister, and I hope to God it will shut you up for good, you sore-headed—"

"You—fly me into the ground?" snarled Leary. "Listen, you classroom pilot—"

"I learned some tricks that'll make your hair curl, brother, and I'll keep you dropping bombs until your hands are as sore as your head and you squeal for mercy like the whining baby you

are! Now get out of here, because if you open your trap once more, I'll kick the living hell out of you!"

AND show Leary some flying he did. He started at twenty-one thousand feet—as high as the Grayson could go without a supercharger. The faces of both were blue with cold when he dived a thousand feet, pulled the Grayson up until it hung by its propellers, and kicked it over in a terrific spin with the motor full on.

Four turns—five—and then the spin started to flatten out again. Bomb after bomb dropped according to Professor Crane's chart for the second experiment; but slowly, as inevitable as Fate, the ship flattened out until it was whirling like a horizontal pinwheel.

Still Craig fought it—fought it as though it was a living enemy—as though it were Leary. Down on the line five hundred people watched tensely. Long streams of cars had motored out from town and every wire service in America was represented with a reporter. At ten thousand feet Leary, no longer the man he had been or the man that his far younger partner-antagonist was, was dizzy and sick. Craig motioned to him to jump. Leary would not. Not until he was about to faint, at seven thousand feet, did he half fall into the air.

At four thousand feet Craig was still trying to subdue the unconquerable ship. He had tried it at every motor speed from idling to wide open, the controls in every combination of positions.

He was nauseated as he jumped. The wing tip missed his head by a hair's breadth. As he swung below his 'chute, his stomach could stand no more. Vomiting straightened him out, however, temporarily. Weak as he was, he laughed as he saw Leary hit the marshy ground alongside the lake and struggle like a mired elephant to extricate himself. He could imagine the language. The G-8 crashed to join its seven companions.

As he came within a few feet of the ground, Craig pulled himself up on the shroudlines and relaxed his muscles. It was agony to use his arms and he could not suppress a groan of pain as he landed and a dozen daggers seemed to be stabbing his chest. For a moment he almost fainted and made no move to save himself from being dragged along the ground. When the pain became acute, he forced himself to release the 'chute.

Every move was a new pain as he climbed aboard the ambulance, to be greeted by Leary's hot eyes glaring balefully at him through a mask of mud. The veteran winced as the doctor worked over his leg, but the expression on his twisted face did not change. Exhaustion, never-ending nervous strain, and physical pain had turned them both into two wounded beasts spitting at each other in the cage they were forced to share.

"Swell day for flying," Craig snapped. "Let's take up another one, eh?"

"Sure," snarled Leary.

"The hell you say!" It was a roar from the ordinarily tranquil doctor. "If I hadn't been delivering a baby, you'd have never got off the ground today. And it may be a long time before you do. Are you both crazy?"

The answer was a double-barreled "Yes!"

An endless day during which hate hung over the little house like a stifling cloud was capped by a night made sleepless by pain except for brief nightmares. A dozen times monsters with the body of a Grayson and the face of a Leary brought the sweating Craig bolt upright in bed.

The next morning, under Leary's jeering eyes, Craig gritted his teeth and swung his arms to show the doctor how well his ribs felt. Leary, lips twisted in a mirthless grin, walked on his bad leg.

"Let me get these tests over with," Craig begged the doctor. "Do you think we like to sit and think about them?"

And the doctor, who had no experience to cope with a situation which kept him awake at nights, could only leave it up to their own judgment.

So it was that two haggard pilots with haunted eyes took up G-9 that day—took it up before a thousand people who were curiously silent as they watched. There were other thousands on the streets of the city, because that battle of men against machinery, fought in the clouds, was becoming a nationwide story—a story which grew bigger as G-9 whirled earthward from nineteen thousand feet.

It spun ten turns before it started to flatten out this time. Once it seemed to Craig that the flat spin slowed and the nose dropped a trifle.

That first ray of hope wiped everything else from a mind which was already closed to anything save the Grayson and Leary. He forgot time and space as he fought the ship, striving viciously to make it respond ever so little again. He abused controls and motors mercilessly, as though trying to hurt a living thing that he hated. And Leary, a grimy devil of the upper air, jeered him on and mocked his efforts to bring the ship under control.

So it was that observers' faces blanched and factory men gave vent to involuntary cries of fear, before Craig shoved a reeling, half-conscious Leary out of the plane at twelve hundred feet. Craig himself dropped from a thousand to six hundred feet before his dazed brain could direct limply plucking fingers to the ripcord ring.

This time it was Leary whose huge body crashed through a scrub oak and dropped five feet to the ground, with blood gushing from a broken nose. But it was Craig whose stomach would not hold an ounce of food for the rest of a day during which the two men did not exchange a word.

THE next morning Leary could not shave because his face was too bruised and scarred. It was Craig who did not shave, because it seemed to him that if the day's flight was not made quickly, he would go stark, raving mad waiting for the ordeal. With scarcely six hours of sleep in the last forty-eight, their only words to each other grim taunts, they made their way to the field in the dim light of early dawn and forced a watchman, who knew nothing of the doctor's orders, to help them get G-10 on the line. They were like men walking in their sleep.

The roar of G-10's motors, shattering the silence of dawn, had the effect generally attributed to Gabriel's trump. Scarcely a house within miles but contributed at least one sleepy observer. The streets of the town became black

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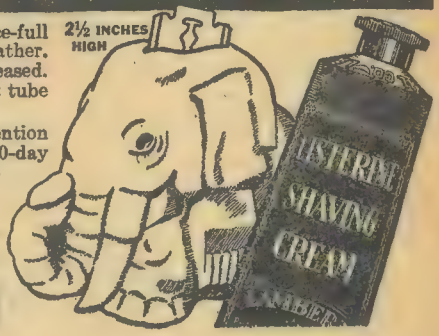

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with people and blaspheming newspapermen racing for the scene of action.

And action they saw.

A hundred field glasses were trained on that speck in the morning sky as it poised on its tail for the plunge which always before had ended in destruction. Then it spun downward like a tiny top gleaming in the sunlight.

Men and women who had learned what was behind the struggle called to each other breathlessly as it spun twelve, fourteen, twenty turns. Seven bombs had been dropped at once—and the ship had not flattened out.

Mr. Grayson, an overcoat over his pajamas, held his breath as he watched his ship spin normally for a full ten thousand feet. In another part of town Waters, the chief engineer, was dancing an impromptu hornpipe.

And eight thousand feet above the earth, two bearded, disheveled ghosts were shouting exultant curses. For the moment the big fellow was Chief Test Pilot Leary of the United States Army Air Service again and Craig was the scientist-flyer with victory in sight.

In fact some tranquil corner of his mind told him that victory had been achieved with the motor on. But that was only half the battle. Most ships went into a spin because the motor was not functioning properly. Unmindful of what had been gained, he slowly drew the throttles back.

Instantly the spin started to flatten. Up front Leary was cursing at him. Self-consciously he noticed that they were only five thousand feet high. Once in a flat spin, with the present weight adjustment, could the Grayson be brought out with the aid of the motor? A monomaniac now, with the end of a deadly three-week trail in sight, Craig set out to find out.

The motor went full on. For a full thousand feet the ship did not answer.

With agonizing slowness the ship started to drop. Craig had forgotten how close the ground was, did not even know that they were spinning squarely over the lake. He forgot there was such a thing as a parachute. Leary was punching at him frantically, but the old war horse would not leave the ship until Craig did.

Craig gave the ship opposite rudder, stick all the way forward. Slowly the spin stopped and the Grayson was in a dive for the lake.

Craig pulled back on the stick. He could not budge it. The change in the center of gravity had made the Grayson nose heavy. Feet braced on the rudder, both hands on the stick, he hauled back with all his strength. Slowly the ship started to answer—but not quite soon enough.

It was just coming level as the wheels dug into the water. The ship flipped over on its back with such a jerk that for a moment Craig thought his neck was broken. He was half drowned by the time he succeeded in reaching the surface, helped by a lift from Leary's hairy paw.

Once again the ambulance was screaming across the field and already two motor boats were chugging toward them from the boathouse.

"She's three-quarters licked," gasped Craig.

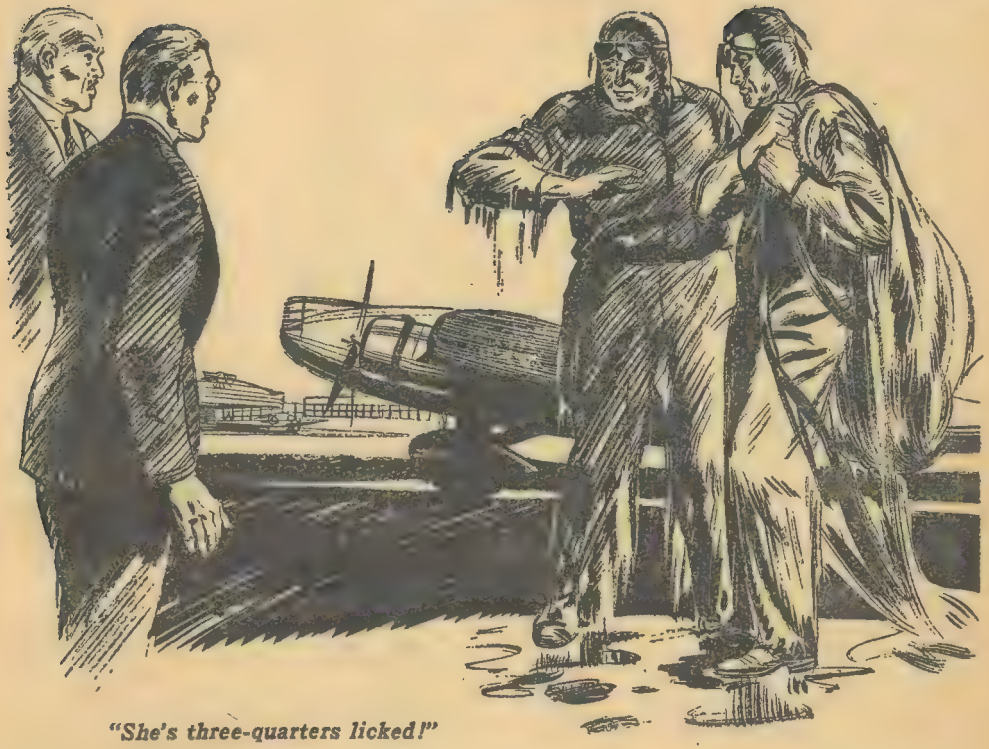
"Your flying was lousy," Leary growled.

He was only half-conscious from sheer exhaustion. His hands loosened their grip. Craig was holding him up when the first boat reached them.

CHAPTER IV

PAY-OFF DIVE

THE ambulance stopped on the line and the beaming Grayson, followed by the exultant chief engineer, clambered in. The congratulations on Grayson's lips remained unspoken for a moment and the news that the board of



"She's three-quarters licked!"

directors of the Grayson Aircraft Co. had voted to do handsomely by the two pilots was forgotten.

Had the two men before him hired out as scarecrows they would have scared the crows into everlasting exile. Two pairs of eyes that gave the manufacturer a creepy feeling blazed forth from horribly battered faces which the slime of the lake had made almost completely unrecognizable. Below those faces wet clothes, festooned with long green streamers, clung to bodies that were shaking with nervousness.

"Boys," Grayson faltered, "I don't know what to say. How do you feel?"

"God's in Heaven, all's right with the world, tra la," Craig told him.

Neither Grayson nor the silent Waters laughed.

"I will wait until you get home and get comfortable before I congratulate you," Grayson said hesitantly. "I have some news that I hope will please you—"

"Nuts," growled Leary. "Is Number Eleven ready to go?"

"Huh?"

It was an astounded exclamation that seemed to be jarred loose from Grayson.

"She won't flat spin with the motor on and we brought her out of one with the motor on," Craig croaked. "One more bomb off the nose may fix that—"

"And she ain't diving right yet and we got to give her a diving test," Leary cut in.

For a moment there was utter silence. The doctor, Grayson, Waters, even the ambulance driver knew now beyond the peradventure of a doubt that some maniacal desire to see the other break first—was behind what they were saying.

It was the doctor who spoke first.

"You are going nowhere except home and to bed!"

"This is our business!" Craig half shouted in his hoarse voice.

"And we'd die for the dear old General Staff!" Leary said.

There was an instant of electric silence. The doctor shrugged his shoulders helplessly. Then Grayson inclined his head.

"Somehow I feel humble in interfering with your plans, gentlemen," he said, "but no ship of mine leaves the ground today."

Craig shrugged his shoulders.

"Then how about sending a few quarts of good liquor up to the house within the next half hour?" he asked, as though making a demand.

"Make it the next five minutes," suggested Leary.

"With pleasure," Grayson told them. "You are going home with them, Doctor?"

"I am. All right, boys, lie back there and be comfortable."

He was cajoling them like children. All possibility of another flight gone, both men seemed suddenly on the verge of collapse.

He gave them both a drink on the way home, and a second shot of brandy, while he was turning his first aid work into more permanent form, served to bridge the gap until the arrival of Grayson's broad-gauge whisky.

THERE were three quarts of it, but by midnight it looked as though the manufacturer's estimate of their capacity had been too conservative.

On the table between the two, only one partly-filled botttle was left, flanked by a pitcher of water and four glasses. Leary was glowering, sullen and drunk. Craig was neither glowering nor sullen, but he was also drunk.

Leary was staring at Craig, an ugly devil peering through the glaze in his eyes.

"And I hate your guts," he snorted. "Chief Test Pilot—phooey!"

Craig leaned back with an overdose of Texas dignity.

"You're so cock-eyed that if you said anything no one could un'erstan' you," he stated.

"If I ain't, I been cheated," Leary told him. "I ain't what you'd call drunk. But you're plastenered!"

"Yeah?" inquired Craig, punctuating his question with a hiccough. "Well, where I was raised a man wasn't fried if he could hit the ground with his hat once out of every three tries."

"You couldn't even do that," Leary said. "Because you haven't got no hat."

"If I had one I could do it," Craig told him. "Have a drink."

"I will," hiccoughed Leary.

Craig poured two glasses full of whisky and spilled as much more on the table. He shoved one glass toward Leary.

"They don't make hats big enough to fit your head," said that gentleman. To which Craig's scintillating retort was: "You're drunk!"

"Where I come from," Leary said as he lifted his glass, "a man wasn't drunk if he could lie flat on the ground, take hold of the grass and keep from falling off."

He took his drink in one gulp.

"The only thing wrong with this liquor is that you poured it."

"Then pour yourself one," said Craig.

Leary immediately accepted this invitation.

"But listen here," he stated, "just because I'm lettin' you drink with me don't mean nothin', you understan'? You're rat poison to me. Very bad for my health."

Craig considered this owlishly for a moment, then brought forth his considered opinion.

"You're so old you haven't got any health."

Leary staggered to his feet.

"I could get up out of my death-bed and out-think, out-fight, out-drink or out-fly you, the best day you ever lived! Anythin' there is to do, I can do better'n you! Have a drink."

"I will," Craig accepted. "Maybe it will keep me from laughin' so hard."

"Oh, you don't think so, huh?" said Leary, leaning across the table.

"You never saw the day. Dog-fight me and I'd clamp on you so close you'd think there was a burr caught in your tail."

"That's the way you affect me on the ground," Leary told him. "You talkin' about flyin', when you never even seen a ship until flyin' got to be a panty-waist profession — parachutes, radio beams, twin motors that never cut out. Why listen, you pop-off punk, you wouldn't 'a' lasted a month in the days when you had to nose down a ship to get speed enough to make a bank.

"I'd like to have seen you flyin' motors that used a magneto and cut dead if a thunder shower hit 'em. Your face would've been as yellow as the streak up your back if you'd made one trip on the border patrol—two hundred miles of solid mesquite in a kite of a ship, with nothing to land in but mesquite and eighty gallons of gas right behind your seat to spray over you in a wreck and make you a human candle. And you're the scientific squirt that comes along with your hat in one hand and a book in another, lickin' everybody's boots to chisel me out of my job."

On and on went the drunken tirade. Leary, growing uglier by the moment, spewed forth the poison in his broken heart and twisted mind like pus from a lanced boil. The liquor in him allowed Craig to pity the bewildered old veteran whose *raison d'etre* had been taken away from him and who was concentrating on a person his resentment of a remorseless Fate.

"So put up or shut up!" the reeling Leary ended, coming forward as though stalking his prey. "It's a bright moonlight night. We'll steal ships. Has-been, am I? I'll ride you into the ground—"

"I'm not going up tonight, you damn fool!" Craig told him as he gave ground. "You're drunk. Sit down."

"Welchin', huh?" sneered Leary. "Well, I feel like flying and tonight's the night."

Craig got in front of him. Leary lunged for him. Craig ducked and, as Leary lurched past him, landed his right to the old-timer's jaw. He dragged the huge crippled hulk to bed but, before he could undress him, his own strength left him completely.

HE perceived next morning, as Leary shook him awake, that the captain had not bothered to undress for a bath when he woke up. Any semblance of tolerance during the drinking bout had disappeared. In its place were raging headaches and a severe attack of the whips and jingles. Neither one had eaten a bite the day before, so two jittery wrecks, who seemed barely able to restrain themselves from leaping at each

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other's throats, limped out on the line where G-11 was being warmed up.

Early as it was, several hundred people were waiting patiently for what the day might develop. Reporters swarmed around the two, firing questions.

"Leave us alone, will you?" the tormented Craig shouted half hysterically.

Every ache and pain in his body seemed intensified and it was as though every frayed nerve in his body was screaming at him.

"One more bomb off the nose and the flat spin is licked!" the murderous Leary told him.

"I know that."

"It's the diving test that's the big thing. Ten to one you'll dog it."

"What do you mean, dog it?" snarled Craig.

"Just what I said. You don't know what a real diving test means. I'll be up there laughing at you—"

"Yeah? I'll show you a dive that'll braid those whiskers around your neck, mister!" Craig exploded. "Now get in there and keep your mouth shut, because if you say another word I'll dive you right through to China—so help me God!"

And three quarters of an hour later it looked to the paralyzed observers below as though that might happen. For the moment, they, like the mad pilots high in the air above them, forgot that a few minutes before, motor on or motor off, the Grayson had refused to flat spin. After those tests, they had seen it climb until it was almost out of sight in the sky—which was no wonder, because it was almost exactly four miles high when Craig jammed the stick all the way ahead and, with both motors wide open, sent it hurtling earthward.

For the first five thousand feet his mouth was like a healed scar in his face, his jaws clamped so tightly that the muscles were like knots. Refusing to leave the bomber's cockpit for a seat at Craig's side, Leary was a mocking Nemesis, contemptuously signaling to Craig to make an already vertical dive steeper.

The Grayson's air-speed meter could register up to three hundred miles an hour, and the needle was against the peg, vibrating as though with a desire to go higher and register the real speed. The terrific air stream repeatedly blew Leary's goggles around his head. The motors were shrieking a protest and the ship was quivering from nose to tail as it hurtled down.

At any moment it seemed that it must come to pieces, and still Craig held it there. Then, suddenly, his mouth opened and an unheard shout, which was half hysterical, came from him. It was half the feeling of the cowboy who has broken a horse and run the beast he has conquered into exhaustion before he stops, half an insane desire to make Leary cry quits. Sixteen thousand feet, fourteen thousand, and still that mad dash earthward continued while two crazy men insulted each other with gestures and unheard blasphemy.

Wing flutter had set in on the right wing, but Craig did not care. He was getting even with that mocking maniac ahead of him, taking out on G-11 all his pent-up hatred.

Craig's lips were twisted in a snarl of satisfaction as he saw the right wing flutter become worse. He'd make Leary flutter with fear as that wing was fluttering, if he had to scrape the grass of the flying field with the wheels.

It was mad, it was inexcusable—but there was something sublime in it too. There was something almost epic in the forty-year old wreck of a man in the bomber's cockpit jeering and insulting and urging his enemy on—

The inevitable happened. The tormented right wing could stand no more. As it crumpled and flashed back against the fuselage, the Grayson made one last deadly lunge at the enemies who had it at bay.

Craig had no chance to duck. The

crippled wing hit him a terrific blow on the back of the neck. He slumped forward, his grotesquely swollen and scarred face hidden on his chest. And as the crippled bomber threshed around in the air, like some prehistoric monster wounded to the death, the young pilot's head flapped with gruesome looseness from side to side.

In that moment of deadly emergency, twenty years of flying made Leary's actions automatic. Without so much as a glance at the ground rushing up, he crawled to the pilot's cockpit. He picked Craig up as though he were a baby. He waited a few seconds until the Grayson was poised, like a wounded bird, for the next sickening slide earthward.

The old-timer's movements were as fast as the strike of a rattlesnake. He pulled both ripcords in a single motion. His arms were locked around Craig before the two bellying 'cutes had jerked them from the plane. His bad leg hit the tail and he screamed with pain, but his death-like grip did not loosen, nor did he lose consciousness until his one good leg had hit the ground in time to save the unconscious Craig from the shock of landing.

CHAPTER V

SALUTE AND FAREWELL

IT was two days and four operations later—three for Craig and one for Leary—when the last-named roughneck, having emerged from the ether, was trundled into a private room in the Dayton hospital. The other occupant was Craig.

Craig opened his eyes just as the operation of suspending Leary's leg in the air on a block-and-tackle arrangement was completed.

"About time you woke up," Leary said gruffly.

"I'd rather stay unconscious," Craig said weakly. Then, after an interval:

"By the way, thanks for chaperoning me down after the big coming-off party. They tell me my head wouldn't even be hanging by a thread if you hadn't."

"Oh, it wasn't anything. I was nuts, anyway," Leary said. "Are you—all right?"

"I'll live, they tell me," Craig said, staring at the ceiling because he couldn't move his head. That was fortunate. Not even Leary would have wanted to see his eyes then. Finally, with an effort, he went on:

"But we're both on the shelf now, Terry. And as one has-been to another, I guess we—er—better shake hands with ourselves, hadn't we?"

"Sure."

Leary had a great deal of difficulty extracting one hand from the covers, but not as much as Craig did inching over in the bed to reach it.

"Pardon my lack of a glove," Craig said with a strained grin. "Those left fingers of mine don't work very well."

IT was three months later, and each had been bedded in many hospitals before they were side by side again. They were standing in front of long lines of glistening ships, facing a grandstand a hundred and fifty feet away which held sixty thousand murmuring people. Flanking them were Black and Kaley.

Leary was leaning on two crutches. Craig could stand with the aid of a cane.

The chief of air service walked slowly to the front of the wooden platform jutting out from the grandstand. His words rolled sonorously across the field as he talked into the microphone above his head.

"Ladies and Gentlemen: I have the honor to declare the combined National Air Races and annual Army maneuvers officially open. That honor is superseded by but one other today—to represent the President and Congress of the

United States in a ceremony which will be the first official event on the program."

The crowd was quiet as death.

"All the world who reads knows of the battle fought by the test pilots of the United States Army Air Service in perfecing our newest and finest ship. To the test pilots who died in that battle; Robert Pelham, Charles Taylor, and John Carruthers, we can give nothing but undying admiration.

"There are also present here today four survivors of that battle. To Test Pilots Lemuel Kaley and Rex Black, I shall have the honor of presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross."

"For the battered and broken leaders of that fight—the men who will soon review the first squadron of the planes they made possible—an even higher honor is in store.

"In the name of the President and Congress of the United States, I call upon Captain Terrence Leary and Lieutenant Rufus Craig, former chief test pilots of the Army Air Service, to come forward with their comrades and receive for gallantry, at the risk of their lives, above and beyond the call of duty, the Congressional Medal of Honor!"

"Aw, for the love o' Mike," mumbled Leary. "You never can hock them medals."

"Get going, boy," came Kaley's unexcited voice.

THEN started the march that none who ever saw it will forget. Four tiny figures, marching across the field two by two, and in the lead two men who limped and stumped along with agonizing difficulty. Leary, his face a scarred wreck and one leg swinging uselessly; Craig, limping, the visible scars on him merely indications of those which were unseen. His eyes were as motionless as his head, held in a brace which was like a vise around his neck.

Now the noise of the crowd was dwarfed by the thunder of three dozen motors. Eighteen Graysons, in perfect formation, hurtled down out of the blue, leveled off a few feet above the ground, and flashed by the men who had made them—and would never fly them again. And as they passed they dipped their noses in salute.

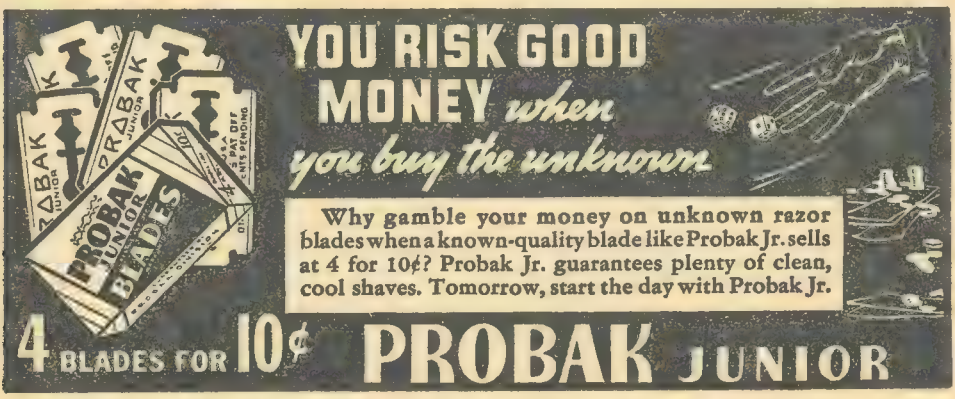
Craig's eye-muscles were the only ones in his body that moved. Slowly, his gaze following the shining ships from one end of the field to the other, then up into the sky as they zoomed a clean thousand feet.

He remembered how a Grayson could hang by its propellers—

He dared not brush his hand across his eyes. He stole a look at Leary. A solitary tear was rolling slowly down the big fellow's seamed face.

They couldn't see each other very well as their eyes met briefly. Leary cleared his throat as he said:

"Couple of hard guys, huh?"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HELL FOR A GUINEA

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

OF a June night, the taproom of the Royal Exchange at King and Exchange Streets in Boston was gay and noisy and thick with tobacco smoke and lusty with the roaring laughter of the king's officers, enjoying their Madeira and port. The room was brave with the glow of scarlet coats, set off by glistening trappings and fine white breeches.

"I'll bet you a guinea on that, sir!" piped up a shrill, eager-shaking voice.

The young ensign in the uniform of the Royal Light Infantry was startled by the words, and looked up, wine glass poised in midair. His gaze fell on the aproned tap boy at his shoulder—a freckled, tousle-headed fellow in apron and rolled-up sleeves, whose eyes glinted back at him unabashed. The table group hushed.

"Why, damme! You're speaking to me?" fairly gasped the ensign.

"Yes, sir; why not? I heard what you said. I'll take your bet—a guinea that it can't be done!"

You insolent young rebel! What was it I said, then?"

"That the king's soldiers would march out o' Boston, clear to Philadelphia, and capture the Continental Congress a-settin' there, all in one march."

"So? And what's to hinder, my charming yokel?"

"Why, sir, the Americans! Ten thousand of 'em have got you king's soldiers cooped up here in Boston."

"And ye think ten thousand half-

armed country rebels can hold five thousand king's troops shut up here?"

The group of officers at the table rocked with laughter, vented loud comments:

"Stap me! The very words of Jack Burgoyne!"

"The yokel's baiting you, Tom; heed him not. He never saw a guinea."

"He's but the tap boy. Kick him off about his business!"

The boy cut in on them, a stubborn glint in his eye as he clung to the issue in shrill defiance.

"They're the country rebels who chased you king's men all the way from Concord, twenty miles, scarce a month back! All right, if you're scared to bet."

An officer started up, flushed and angry.

"Zounds! This passes bearing. A rabble shooting from ditches at troops ordered not to fight—and he has the damned impudence to twit us! You know, fellow, that our troops were ordered to retire?"

The boy's freckles wreathed a quick, impish grin.

"Aye, sir. I know your king's troops marched out to *Yankee Doodle* and came back to *Chevy Chase!*"

"Keep your tongue to yourself before gentlemen, or you'll get a flogging—"

"Wait, now; wait, I say!" exclaimed the young ensign with generous impulse.

He turned about in his chair, smiling. His tanned boyish face, high-bred, good-humored, was handsome against powdered queue and blue cocked hat. He inspected the freckled features of the tap boy and smiled again.

"You know what General Gage said—that with five regiments of British regulars he could march through America as he pleased? Well, he has the men. Howe, Burgoyne, Clinton and other famous officers are here. What have you rebels got?"

"We got a power o' men who can shoot," the tap boy said stoutly.

"Farmers and provincial militia, who can hit a running deer, yes. That's different from British bayonets at the charge, my lad. Why do you seek a quarrel with me?"

"I don't, sir, but you said you'd bet a guinea. I want to make it."

"Then you're a rebel, too?"

"I be, if you mean am I ag'in having king's soldiers tell us what to do—but I'm argufyin' to make the guinea."

The table group laughed. Here was an honest yokel, at least.

"So," gibed the ensign, "you'd lay me a guinea that the king's troops stay cooped up, as you put it, here in Boston?"

"Yes, sir—anyhow till you run away on those ships out in the bay."

"Gad, but ye have a tongue, eh?" The young officer flushed slightly. "Listen, now. I'm Thomas Michael de Coursey Sullivan, ensign in His Majesty's Fifty-second. What may be your name?"

"Adam Ford."

"Have you a guinea, Adam Ford?"

"I can get one."

"Done with you, then." Ensign Thomas Michael de Coursey Sullivan squeezed a broad golden guinea out of a pocket. "Here's mine. A guinea that our troops will be out of Boston and marching for Philadelphia as quickly as they damned get orders!"

Adam Ford grinned, and his throat-apple bobbed.

"Then I'll have to ask Gen'ral Gage to set a time on the bet, sir."

"You ask the general—you?" snapped Sullivan. "Here. This is Friday, June 16th. I'll lay the guinea that our troops now in Boston sweep your rebel provincials out of their way in a sortie before Monday next!" Down went the bright guinea on the table with a fine, challenging ring of metal. "Gentlemen, you're witnesses! A guinea that we're well out of Boston within three days!"

"Aye, sir, it's a bet!" cried Adam Ford. His voice was drowned in a low chorus

of expostulation. One officer spoke out frowningly.

"Tom, 'ware ears! Make it two weeks, if you must bet—"

"No, damme—three days, I said, to give the lout a chance for the guinea," the ensign broke in. "Come, boy! Where's your guinea?"

"My uncle has one," exclaimed the boy. "I'll have to get it from him, only he's in Charlestown. I'll fetch it, though."

THERE was a burst of uproarious merriment that sent a flush into the cheeks of the young ensign. His eyes flamed at the tap boy.

"So you've no guinea after all, eh? You know you can't reach Charlestown. You know cursed well no one goes out of Boston without a pass. So you back down, eh?"

"I don't!" flared Adam Ford heatedly. "I'll fetch it, I tell you! I can slip through the lines and get across the river in a boat."

"And back again? Impossible. Why, sink me if you're not in earnest about it!" Ensign Sullivan stared, until more chaffing sent his color flaming again. "Yankee trick, eh? Damn if I don't get you a pass so you can fetch, as you call it, your money! I'll have it from Gage himself. We'll see if your bark is all brag, my lad!"

Sullivan sprang up. A gallant stripling figure, he made impetuous way across the floor to the table in the alcove, set apart for higher ranks. The officers there ceased their talk, staring at him and the tap boy who followed him.

"General Gage, sir. It's Tom Sullivan of the 52nd, needing a pass to the outside."

The stout man of longish, florid face, whose barbered hair powdered his red shoulders, broke into a smile.

"Can't she wait, Sullivan? Ye see, Burgoyne, how I'm like to lose all my young cockerels to these Yankee beauties! A pass? Why, man, 'twould be your ruin, love's labor lost! Your appointment with the fair creature would turn out to be a trap!" Then, sighting the boy behind, the general sobered. "Who's that behind you, a tap boy? The young woman's brother with your assignation? Faugh, Sullivan! For shame!"

"The pass is not for me, General, but for this very fellow," cried Sullivan quickly. "The honor of the uniform, sir! The rascal has had the impudence to lay me a guinea on the provincial rebels holding our troops to Boston! But, sir, his guinea's in Charlestown, he claims, and I've bade him go get it."

Comprehension spread in a laugh. Gage held his sides in merriment.

"And Clinton and Howe have brought fowling pieces and fishing rods, for sport while chasing the rebels—God save us all! Why, Sullivan, would ye take the loon's family guinea away from him?"

"In trade for a pass to Charlestown and back, General."

"Rare, sink me if it isn't rich and rare!" The general shook with laughter. "A guinea tax for insulting his Majesty's uniform! Yes, I'll give him the pass. What's his name—oh! Adam Ford, eh? I'll pass him from paradise here under the protection of the king, to hell among the rebels." Chuckling, the general scribbled on a blank, and handed over the paper. "Here, fellow. Take it and get out."

Adam Ford glanced at the writing:

> Pass the bearer, Adam Ford, to hell and back by way of Charlestown, if he so elects.
>
> Thos. Gage.

"Thank'ee, sir," he said eagerly. "I'll speak to the landlord and get my leave."

"And mind," warned Sullivan, "I'll be looking for you!"

Adam Ford sought out the landlord. A flick of the eye, a nod, and they talked in a corner of the kitchen.

"It's between now and Monday night, sir."

"How d'ye know that, Adam?"

"From an officer. I bet him a guinea and he set the time."

"A guinea? You've no guinea, lad!"

"I told him I'd get one from my uncle in Charlestown. I'm going to take out the news, sir."

"You can't get through. I'll not have you risking a bullet—"

"I've a pass, sir!" Ford said eagerly, and displayed the billet. "I'll get off now and get the word through to Cambridge, before I come back."

"Why come back, then?"

"I same as promised to see him again. Besides, it means a guinea earned, sir."

"Get along with you then, and God keep you safe! My respects to your uncle."

SO here was Adam Ford, coated and hatted, excitement in his heart, on his way through the streets. Once and again he was stopped by patrols, questioned, sent along with a gale of laughter rising behind him when the general's little jest was savored.

Before him stretched the broad, blackish estuary of the Charles, dividing Boston from Charlestown on the north. Yonder to the west lay Cambridge and the main American camp; but up the river was the quickest way, rather than roundabout through the ribald streets rife with redcoats, to Boston Neck and the mainland.

The tide flowed dark with thickening night. Off in the harbor eastward glimmered the lights of British warships. Here at the Boston side of the Charles were boats; but soldiers held the ferries, and the plash of an oar putting out would bring musket balls. Also, sentries walked their beats here along the river and patrols were on constant move. Ford could see the lanterns.

A hugely tall creature grew through the gloom, a grenadier barring his way with long firelock.

"Who comes there?"

"A citizen with a pass."

"Stand where ye be while I call the guard. Hi, corporal o' the guard!"

The corporal came, squinted at the paper in the spotty light of his lantern, and handed it back with a grin.

"All right, then. To hell with you, and plenty of company! Sure, a fine young fellow like you ought to be in a red coat for the king, God bless him! But get along."

The way was clear, the boats at his disposal. Ford cast off a skiff and shoved out. He hesitated. Should it be Charlestown and the guinea, first, or Cambridge? Why, Cambridge by all means! The young ensign had not disguised the truth. The troops would make a sortie against the American lines that shut them in by land, and would do it inside three days. General Artemas Ward, of the volunteers at Cambridge, ought to know this at once. Within three days? Why, that might mean in the morning!

Ford was already stroking lustily at the oars.. A cool dampness soaked through his shoes; the cursed old skiff was leaky. It was taking in water fast. He rowed with a savage burst of effort, while the scattered lights of Charlestown slowly drifted past and behind. Few folks left in Charlestown now, he reflected. Most of them had fled across Charlestown Neck to the mainland.

The water was swishing and gurgling about his legs as he turned in to the Neck. He landed with the boat half awash, barely in time. Charlestown lay off to the right; in front, topping the Neck, was Bunker Hill. He would have to go on by foot across the Neck, on until he could meet someone who would carry the word to Cambridge.

The night was very still. From the harbor, he could hear the ships' bells, the drifting calls of sentinels on the Boston side. Now he struck out, walking briskly in his sodden shoes.

He rounded Bunker Hill and labored on for the Neck, which was built up through swampy ground like a cause-

way, and boggy at high tide. Lights glittered ahead, cottage lights, outpost lights. He thought of that young ensign, no older than himself, but high-bred and proud in his scarlet coat. Not a bad fellow at all; in fact, his smile had been friendly and warm, until the wine and the chaffing set him aflush—

Ford halted suddenly. Something was moving in the night ahead, moving with a faint clatter of metal, a low, confused murmuring. Cattle, perhaps—no! Men on the march, of course! Men coming from the mainland for the Charlestown Neck he had just left!

A dark lantern or two sent lightrays glimmering on moving legs. Adam Ford went ahead suddenly. A lantern swung its light on his face, and arms caught and pinioned him fast. A voice growled at him.

"Who are you? Where bound?"

"Adam Ford of Charlestown, from Boston—"

"What's this talking here?"

A voice that Ford knew, and it brought a gasp of thankfulness from him. Colonel Prescott of the Massachusetts minute men, striding forward in a heat. Top wig, regimentals of blue hue, blue frock coat with facings and turned-back corners, belted sword; altogether a stalwart figure. He had been often at the house of Ford's uncle.

"Oh! Young Ford, eh? Loose him, sergeant. I know him. What are doing here, lad?"

"News, sir, news! The British plan a march out of Boston!"

Ford blurted out his word, and then his excitement fell cold.

"Aye, we've been warned," said Prescott, "but thanks to you all the same, Ford. Stand aside, and fall in later. You'll get a spare firelock from the first wagon when it comes along."

"Fall in!" The words echoed in Ford's heart. Charlestown was forgotten, and the guinea, and all else.

The plunging column was pressing forward with pant and oath and stumble. Two horse-drawn cannon rattled along, then a wagon with a jolt and jingle. The wagon was loaded with spades, mattocks, picks. Ford made at the wagon, scrambled aboard from the tail, and barked his shins on the tools. The driver turned.

"Ye can't ride here! Agin' orders."

"I don't aim to ride. Colonel Prescott said to get me a gun."

"Oh! That's different. Abner Butters dropped out, 'count of cramps in the stomach. Here's his piece and fixin's."

Ford slung the cow-horn of powder over his shoulder, stuffed a fistful of bullets into a pocket, and seized the long musket. He floundered back to the wagon tail and twisted to the ground. As he hurried forward, he shouldered into a file of marchers. A hand caught at him.

"Who be you?"

"Adam Ford, of Charlestown."

"I'm Jasper Martin of Middlesex. Fall in and keep step."

THE column was slogging along, crossing Charlestown Neck. Men, a lot of them. Ford muttered quick and eager questions. Where bound, why?

"I dunno what. Nobody knows. Hush up—we ain't to talk."

They were off the Neck now, and climbing. Bunker Hill swelled darkly ahead, and under foot, as they climbed. At the top, the column jammed and came to relieved halt. Orders, contrary orders, were passed. Somewhere ahead, argument was going on. Somebody near Ford laughed softly.

"That's Old Put's voice yonder. He allows we're precious of our legs but ain't a-feared for our heads. Give us leg-cover and we'll fight forever—"

"Shut up, there! Don't you know the orders?"

The argument went on for a long time in the darkness.

"Hey, Ford!" It was Jasper Martin, grunting softly. In the darkness, Ford

could sense him as a lean, long horse-faced man. "What'd you jine up for?"

"What for? Why, Colonel Prescott said to fall in. I want to fight. The king's soldiers can't tell us what to do."

"Aw, the king ain't to blame!" argued Martin. "It's the fellers who make the laws and the taxes without a by-your-leave. And shooting of us down, like in Lexington and at Concord."

"Somebody fired fust."

"Sartin; somebody'll fire last, too. But I'm loyal to the king as long as he lets us be loyal."

A man next them spat a disgusted oath.

"You fellows give me a pain in the neck. King George could stop all this if he had a mind to. King's soldiers, ain't they?"

Ford lowered his voice. "And you, Martin? What are you fighting for?"

"I aim to get me a redcoat to pay for the Concord killing."

"Silence, there! Silence!" The order was passed down and repeated. "Forward, men! No more of that talking!"

On again now, and blindly enough. The sky was starry, but the June night air was heavy, damp with the mists from the Charles River on the south and the Mystic on the east. Boston lay dark, across the Charles. A dank and salty smell drifted in from the tide flats.

The march followed the dip of the long clay ridge, trended south and climbed afresh. The word came to halt, and again it was a confused jumble.

"You're from Charlestown," said Martin. "Know where we be?"

"Guess we're about on John Breed's pasture, on the south hill," said Ford. "It's nigher to Boston than Bunker is."

An officer came blustering along the files, with a growl of commands.

"Ground arms and fall out, everybody! Bring up the tools, men. We're to throw up works here. And don't make any noise to rouse the redcoats!"

The belfries of Boston were pealing midnight. From the ships in harbor came the drifting "clang-clang" of eight bells being struck. On this still air, Ford even heard the distant bawl of a sentry from across the Charles: "Post number four. Twelve o'clock and all's well; God save the King!"

Probably, he thought, the tap room of the Royal Exchange was still going full blast. A gay crowd, those officers; and Ensign Sullivan would be waiting for that guinea to match his own. Probably thought the tap boy had taken leg bail, and never intended to come back.

Pshaw! Ford, laboring away with a pick, paused to wipe his sweating eyes. Go back? Better not. Boston's no good place for anyone ketched in arms against the king. The British will be thundering mad when they see these works in the morning, too. The ensign will have to come up the hill if he wants that guinea! And grinning, he struck his pick into the ground again, and tugged.

The steaming, sweaty night wore its course. A thousand men, with coats shed, picked and spaded along the endless line of white cord. Adam Ford had envied the gang stretching that cord. Old Colonel Gridley ordered them about —easy work, stretching a cord along the hillside.

The ditched redoubt, of irregular shape, grew plainer with the dawn. Cocks were a-crow, what few the British foragers had missed. Daybreak in another hour, and then sunup would come with rush of pink-gold glory.

"When the redcoats see how we've been playing *Yankee Doodle* on a shovel up here," panted Ford, "d'you suppose they'll come to fight?"

Jasper Martin spat on his hands and smothered an oath.

"I dunno. Why we're doin' it, I dunno neither. We only got twenty-four hour rations and no store o' powder. If we don't get supplied, we'll be in a fix. I begin to wish I was back in Cambridge."

"Stop the chatter," came the order. "Keep working."

When the eastern sky lightened, the redoubt was tolerably high. A short line of low breastworks broke the down slope to the northeast, toward the swampy flats below. And then, almost before anyone realized it, the eastern sky was all flushed and lovely.

Five minutes to sunup, and all the lobster-backs sleeping sound, thought Ford as he looked. Not a sound from sprawling Boston. The mists cleared off, the shimmering waters were touched with pink and blue.

"Look! Look!" The eager word passed. No more silence now. Everyone craned to see, to point. The thin, unmusical piping of a bo'sun's whistle lifted faintly from the *Lively*, that frigate in the mouth of the Charles. Men were black on her decks, were moving about; she was swinging on her cable, bringing her broadside to bear.

Ford thrilled as the smoke gushed from the maindeck gun. The sullen roar of it followed; an arching ball, plainly seen, landed and plunged and rolled, falling far short.

A boat put out from the frigate, but now the whole squadron was awake and at it. Powder-smoke drifted across the waters. All Boston was tumbling out of bed, and as the sun uprose to see, it showed the roofs crowding with people, while a rolling tumult of shouts and far voices filtered through the cannon explosions.

"Gosh a'mighty, look at them folks!" and Martin grinned sourly. "We're giving 'em a free peep-show, and don't cost a penny neither."

"It'll cost somebody a guinea," said Adam Ford, his eyes gleaming excitedly.

"What d'ye mean?"

"Oh, a bet I made."

The iron balls were furrowing the hill slope now. A hiss and a scream overhead. Jasper Martin ducked, his face suddenly white and working.

"I don't like this!" he broke out abruptly. "We didn't come up here to be shot at by big guns. Ain't fair—"

Ford looked up as a figure loomed along the parapet, walking unhurried. It was Colonel Prescott. His voice came calm and unafraid.

"Never mind the cannon, boys! They can't harm you—"

A stir, a scream. Martin stared with bulging eyes at a flurry down the line.

"Man killed—cut near in two!" he gulped out. "They're fetching him in from outside. My gosh, it's awful—"

"I can't stand for this!" rose a voice. Another joined in.

"Me neither. Didn't come up here to be shot at half a mile—"

Shrill panic of voices outbroke. A few men were leaving from the rear of the works. They went running, ducking, for Bunker Hill and the Neck. Strangely enough, the sight brought a roar of rage from Martin.

"The damned cowards! They've seen more blood than that when they slaughtered a sheep!"

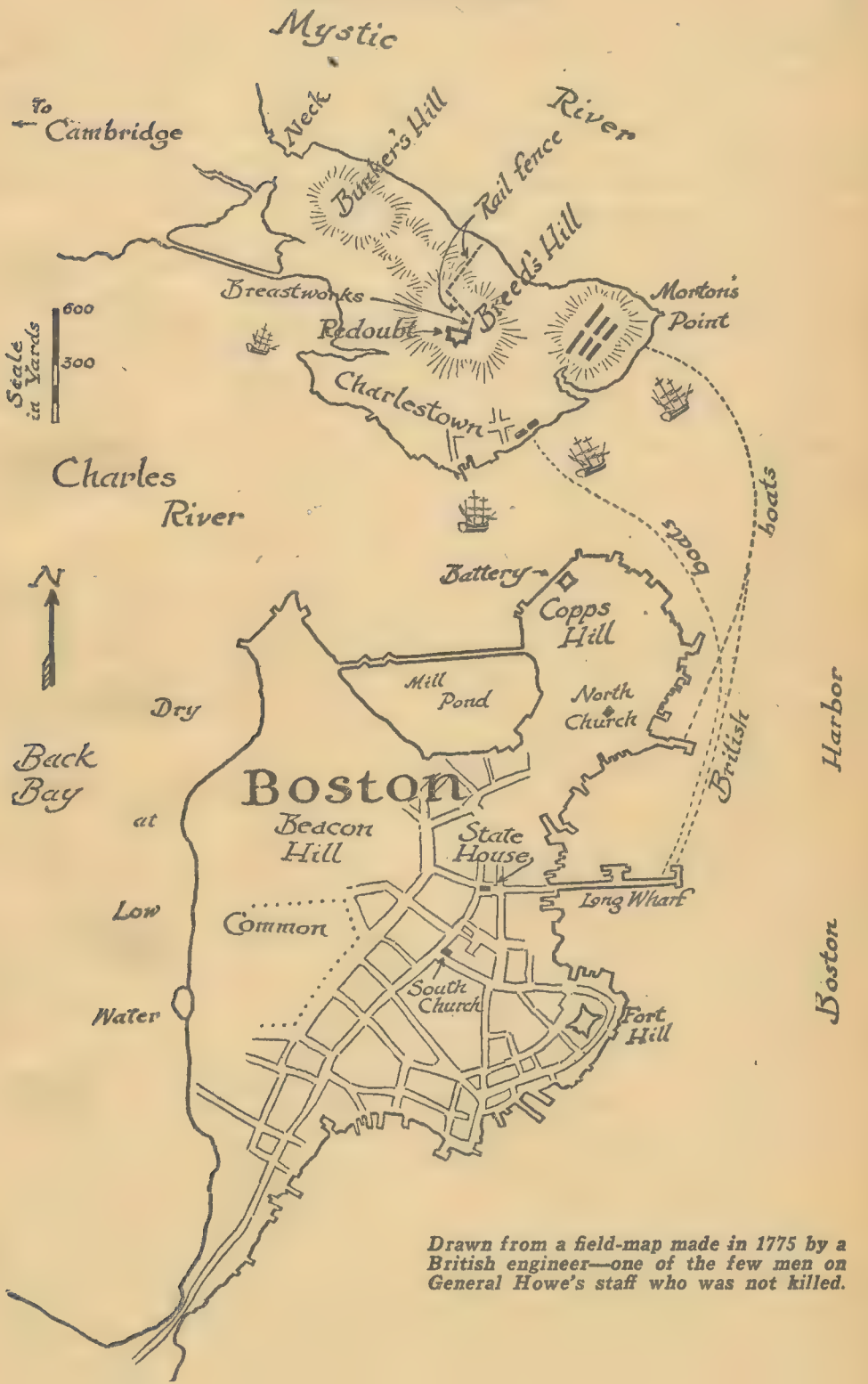
Others joined in his anger. The panic was checked. The body, wrapped in red-dripping blanket, was brought along. Someone hailed Prescott.

"What'll we do with this body, Colonel?"

"Bury it in the trench and go back to work."

FOILED and futile, the bombardment from the ships dwindled away and ceased. Laughs began to rise, spirits warmed. Ford hauled and thumped with the rest, laying plank platforms across the ditch behind the ramparts; men with muskets needed level footing to clear the breastworks.

As the morning wore on, the Boston roofs were still occupied, the church ridgepeaks lifting like islands from a human sea. Everywhere troops were in motion. The rattling skirl of fife and drum sounded plainly; so did the clatter of artillery wheels hauling cannon over the cobbled Boston streets. These works



Drawn from a field-map made in 1775 by a British engineer—one of the few men on General Howe's staff who was not killed.

on Breed's pasture land had roused a hornets' nest indeed.

Ford straightened up, panting, for a rest and a look. The sun was growing mighty hot by this time. Copp's hill, across from Charlestown, was red with uniforms; gilt trappings flashed, now and then a spyglass winked. There were big guns on Copp's hill, Adam Ford knew.

And suddenly they were banging away. Once again the iron balls were arching, were thudding around, were screaming overhead. With the flood tide, the ships were hauling in on their cables for shorter range. A couple of floating batteries were being towed to better position. Ford could see it all being done, he and the men around him ducked the screaming balls and looked at one another with straining eyes. Afraid? Yes; his heart was hammering.

The work on the redoubt was finished now. They could all see that the working parties had been cannonaded away from the breastworks on the northeast slope, reaching down toward the swamp. On beyond, a swell of mown hay-land extended and fell away to the Mystic.

Voices broke out all around Ford.

"What are we here for, if the Britishers don't come?"

"And where are our reinforcements? First thing we know, we'll be cut off at the Neck. Then we won't have a chance. We're goners, sure!"

"We've worked all night," Jasper Martin growled. "I don't mean to set here dodging cannon balls. Ain't fair. Let the troops back in Cambridge spell us. What say, Ford?"

"I don't know." Ford hesitated. "I'm here to earn a guinea. Reckon I'll stay."

"Well, I come to shoot a redcoat. I'll stay likewise. Hi! There's Old Put—look at him, will you?"

Israel Putnam came galloping in, and his voice shrilled at Prescott.

"I'm going to raise some works on Bunker Hill. They'll do to fall back on for another stand, if so happens. I need your tools, and men to use them. Ward will send you reinforcements."

Prescott demurred. "You can have the tools, but the men who built these works are the ones to defend them."

"I'll see that every man comes back to you."

Jasper Martin, watching men flock away with the tools, muttered dark oaths.

"They won't a one come back; you'll see. If I hadn't allowed to stay with you, I'd skip too, you bet! We're losin' what men we got, instead of getting more."

The hot sun neared the noon mark, the Charles lay like a sheet of silver. The ships, the floating batteries, the guns on Copp's hill, had re-opened full blast, with booming salvos. All the while, fifes and drums had been going. Now an excited yell rippled along the line of men on the hill. A fleet of boats, ruddy and aglitter with troops and bayonets, was rounding the point of the outer harbor.

The British were coming! Everyone jumped for the parapets, regardless of the thudding and screaming balls. Here was a show not to be missed. Some cursed, some laughed as they gazed, some stood silent and adread.

Adam Ford looked around curiously, at things and men. Fowling pieces, firelocks, all kinds of weapons, with a smattering of bayonets. Bullet sacks and powder horns. A few uniforms, mostly in the Connecticut companies, but mainly homespun and flax, with long calico shirts, broad farmer hats.

Faces were curious to see, he thought. Dirty and sweated, white or flushed, eager, ashen with slow fear; the black faces of several colored men showed laughing white teeth. Martin was spitting between his teeth, chewing at a sliver for toothpick, and fingering his musket, all at once. Dirt flew all about from the cannon balls, but they did no damage here.

What a sight it was, down yonder! The boats were towed in lines, with the

sweeps of the barges all aflash. Fifteen, twenty, twenty-eight in all, packed with soldiers. Why didn't the two guns up here let fly?

"Short on powder," grunted Martin. "They fired one a few times, a while back."

Old Put was back, in a lather, with a yell that reinforcements were on the way. The boats came on steadily, making for Norton's Point; evidently they meant to land and attack those breastworks along to the left.

ORDERS flew down the line. The Connecticut companies went trailing at the double to man those breastworks. Some of them passed on to the swell of hayland beyond the swamp.

Aye, the redcoats were landing now. Landing and marching, forming up in lines, sweeping on into the long grass in front of the breastworks, but beyond musket shot. Officers gathered in clumps. The ranks stacked arms and sat down. They went to eating from their haversacks and drinking out of buckets, while the boats put off again for Boston.

"Thunderation! Look at them lobsterbacks filling their bellies with grog and vittles, and we ain't got a cup o' cold water!" burst out Martin furiously. "Ain't even got an extry gill o' powder. What's that they're singing?"

Voices chorused in a roaring uplift:

"See how! See how! They break and fly before us,
See how they're scattered over all the plain!
Now, now! Now, now! Our country will adore us,
In peace and in triumph, boys, when we return again."

A growl of expletives ran along the watching parapet.

"There's a power of bayonets down there," somebody said uneasily.

"And we're down to five hundred men," grumbled Martin. "There come the boats—good gosh a'mighty! What's happened?" He leaped to his feet. Men were yelling. A line of figures was flooding up on the left. "New Hampshire men!" shouted Martin exultantly. "There's old John Stark—he served with Rogers' Rangers! Hurray!"

The New Hampshire companies trudged to the far left and on toward the Mystic. Men fell out to help stuff the fence-line with hay. This arrival sent a thrill of new life through the whole line; Ford found himself yelling with the rest as the contagion took hold.

Fifes squealed suddenly, drums began to roll—the redcoats were coming! They were in sections of platoons, two divisions, the officers marching in front with drawn swords. One division headed for the rail fence and the left, the other for the hill and redoubt.

Prescott leaped into action, sending off detachments to flank the column on the Charlestown side, ordering the men to hold their fire.

"Yah! Now we got about two hundred left here," growled Martin, ramming home his charge and patch and bullet. "Connecticut and Hampshire's got to hold their stand whilst we fight our bloody-bellies down the hill. Well, I aim to kill me a redcoat to pay for Lexington!"

"They're getting a sweat," said Ford, loading with shaking, excited hands.

"Don't a man fire till ordered!" lifted Prescott's voice.

The solid red ranks, two men deep, began to climb. The soldiers leaned forward a little; they came on with knees high, brushing through the tall grass. A ripple of quick orders sounded, and the officers fell back. The long line had stopped. The muskets came up, glinting in the sun.

"Down! Down! They're a-going to shoot—"

Ford ducked, pulled Martin down—*cra-a-ash!* The volley roared forth. A storm of lead swept high above the par-

apet. Ford raised up and peered down at the billowing smoke. The redcoats were reloading, ramming home the cartridge charges, clapping pans to settle the priming. They were coming on again.

Men were muttering, laughing nervously; Ford saw their faces white and set, their eyes staring. A yell of warning, and down again. Another gush of smoke, the crashing volley, the scream of lead above. The platoons came on, halting every half-dozen steps to volley again. An excited rumble stirred the lines.

"No powder to waste!" Prescott warned. "Body shots, boys. Wait the order."

"What's that? Wait till you see the whites of their eyes?" somebody cried. "Wait for the order—then load quick."

"I'm going to kill me a redcoat right quick, now," Martin was saying, over and over, his long horse-face intent.

Through the eddying smoke rose the tall peaked hats of the grenadiers, the sweated, grinning faces, the scarlet coats, buff waistcoats, white crossbelts, gaitered legs. Ford saw them grow and grow. Whether Ensign Sullivan were here, he could not tell. He could see nothing but the shapes there ahead, coming on and on. He held the sight of his firelock on a grenadier's middle. The grenadier was panting, hazed by the smoke; large of face, heavy of gaitered calves, panting with his mouth open—

"Fire!" Prescott shouted.

Ford pressed trigger. The flint rang upon the frizzen; sparks flew, pan flashed, the piece jarred in his hands and kicked furiously as the muzzle spurted smoke. He heard no report. All the parapet was in a quick shudder like a far thunder-roll. He did not see his grenadier. A roil of smoke blocked everything from sight.

He did not wait to see, but sprang down, like the rest, and under cover reloaded at top speed. He was slow about it, cursed in a shrill high voice as he worked. Then it was done, and he was scrambling up again.

The smoke had wafted thinner. The redcoat front line was sprawling, staggering, torn to fragments, men shrieking and cursing. The standing figures and the rear line were posted fast, shooting like mad.

"Another!" yelled Martin.

The parapet shuddered under the ragged volley. Ford pulled with the rest, could remember nothing of that moment. It was done; the king's troops could stand no longer. They broke, carried their officers with them, broke and ran down the slope, leaving the ground margined with bloody red and white—men who lay or dragged or screamed.

FORD found himself on the parapet with the rest, yelling like mad, rifle waving, fists brandished. Off to the left, the redcoats were streaming away from the breastworks and the hay-stuffed fence. Ford found Martin pounding him on the back, yelling hoarsely.

"Hi! Did you earn your guinea?"

"I dunno. Did you kill your redcoat?"

"Smoke too plaguey thick to see."

Fresh yells sounded alarm. "They're comin' back!"

On again; the whole thing over again, but now the faces along the parapet were set, exultant, grim, no longer white and anxious. Prescott held the word this time to a scant thirty paces; then the parapet shuddered.

All in a fog of smoke—jump down, reload, up again and shoot pointblank. Ford could not tell how often he shot. He fumbled again, and had but one bullet left. A mad shrill yell swept into a second, hoarser wave of triumph. They were broken again.

"Ding me if the redcoats ain't got pluck!" Martin was rasping with dry throat. "Hope they don't come again. Down to a pinch o' powder."

The soldiers were at the boats, were clambering aboard—no! Officers were tumbling them out, prodding them, laying on with the flat of their swords,

forcing them into ranks. A number of officers were conferring together in a huddle.

Prescott and Warren came along the line.

"Powder and ball? Coming, boys. Just hold out once more and the fight is won. Powder's been sent for. It's coming."

"So are the redcoats," and Martin blasted an oath. "Look there!"

Ford looked, and saw troops who must have landed during the last charge. British marines, part of them, the others light infantry. They stood bewildered, awaiting orders. A skiff came across the Charles estuary, in a hurry. The man in the sternsheets sat bolt upright. Ford recognized him with a thrill. Clinton!

"I know that officer!" Ford burst out eagerly. "It's Clinton. He's landed now, and the big man talking to him is General Howe. Ain't seen Burgoyne or Gage."

Men pressed around to hear him tell how he had seen these officers at the tavern, and to stare down at the generals. Time passed; the flames of Charlestown crackled and soared on spumes of smoke as buildings caved in.

Suddenly Ford realized that new faces were here: militia in blue frock coats with red facings. Massachusetts men, he heard them say.

"Did you bring any powder?" he cried at them. Others were crying the same, only to end in bitter cursing. The militia had a gill of powder and fifteen balls each.

Then a quick surge, a storm of voices. A sergeant came along and thrust a tin cup under Ford's nose.

"Ain't hardly fit for priming," he apologized sweatily. "From a cannon ca'tridge. Colonel Prescott says everyone's to dip light and not spill any. No more bullets."

Ford turned away. "I got only one ball left, and enough powder for that—"

"Hi! Look at the lobster-backs!" spouted the yell.

The king's troops down yonder were alive now. They were dumping their heavy knapsacks, even peeling off their tight coats. A ripple of orders, and answering ripple of clicks—bayonets, this time! General Clinton was running to the head of the idle reinforcements, on the right. Files of men were hauling cannon forward on the left, where General Howe was posted. The ranks formed and moved with feeble cheers.

"Ain't much heart in 'em," observed Martin critically. "Let 'em get over with the bayonet, Ford, and you'll earn your guinea."

Three columns now, right, left and center, all aiming for the reddened hilltop. Ford, the westering sun behind him, licked his parched lips as he watched. The redcoats were not spreading out now—they had learned better. They were trudging up in columns, muskets at shoulder and bayonets fixed. No halting to fire, this time.

Over toward the fencing on the left, shooting began, muskets and cannon both. Through the smoke came a yell and a surge of men, as the Connecticut troops boiled into the redoubt, cannon raking them. The redoubt was jammed, five hundred men in a space of forty yards square, all of them scrambling to line the parapet.

"Hold your fire for twenty paces!" The order was passed along.

Ford's eyes widened, became fixed in gulping panic. The gaitered legs of this center column, over against him, were passing the crimsoned windrows; the buckled shoes were splashed with scarlet. The faces of the front rank, under the peaked hats, looked drawn and frightened.

"Pick off the officers!" The words passed from man to man.

The paper in Adam Ford's pocket crinkled as he shifted position and aimed. "Pass bearer to hell . . ." that was it. As he sought for a mark down the files, he caught his breath. He

squinted over his sights squarely into the eyes of Ensign Sullivan. He jerked the barrel and shifted aim.

The head of the column had passed the dead and wounded. "With the bayonet—charge!" rang the order. The first two ranks leveled their bayonets; they pushed forward, leaning as though breasting a storm. Then came Prescott's voice.

"Fire!"

THE piece in Adam Ford's hands sparked and jarred again. Smoke billowed from the parapet, then burst before rifts of red—an increasing glow of red, then a mass of red, blue, white, peaked hats, bayonets, fierce faces, in a stagger and a maze. But surging forward and in.

Here, a sudden wild tumult of confusion. Men shooting, men clubbing their guns, catching up stones and hurling them. Red faces and figures flowed above the parapet, only to ebb back. Others towered again like uptossed surf. A jostle and surge carried Ford off the platform. He stumbled back, halted, looked again.

A single figure, directly before him, was atop the parapet. The ensign, young Sullivan! He was alone, sword lifted high, face half turned.

"Hurrah! The day is ours!" shrilled his voice. And then another voice, growling, at Ford's elbow.

"Last shot! I make sure of one anyhow." It was Martin, throwing up his musket.

"No, no!"

Frantically, Ford struck at the musket, but was too late. The smoke belched. Down pitched the slim boyish figure, sliding forward clear of the wooden platform and into the redoubt.

Ford made a dive for him. Sullivan lay stretched on his back in his sweat-stained bright uniform, head bare and face turned up, his blue boyish eyes open. Now everything was dust from trampling feet; the redoubt was a hell of curses and groans, shouts and rabid cheers, thud of butt and barrel and clash of steel, as the redcoats flowed over. Here below the platform, Ford crouched over Ensign Sullivan, forgetful of all else.

"Oho, the tap-room yokel!" The ensign smiled wanly. He fumbled at his waistcoat pocket with weak thumb and finger, all red and sticky. "Egad, we win, I lose! The guinea, lad. The guinea!"

"Oh, I don't want it, I don't want it!" burst out Ford. "I didn't get to Charlestown and back—"

"A pass to hell. Gage was right." The blue eyes were clouding, the words came with effort. "Orders—to hell. Find there—provincials standing off—king's troops. Day is ours, tomorrow's—yours—"

He gasped, made a convulsive effort. The guinea gleamed yellow in his reddened hand. "King's officer never—never welches. Gage won't march after this. You win—you—"

Ford took the guinea as it fell. "I don't want it! I'll keep it safe, carry you back out of this!"

Sullivan's lids had fluttered; he sighed, and smiled eternally.

With a crash, the platform sagged and broke. A great rush of those gaitered legs and charging bodies swept Ford aside and away. Here was a fury of dust and struggle; he went with the mass, carried along blindly. On through the redoubt, out of it, still on in wild panic and retreat. Voices pierced the dust.

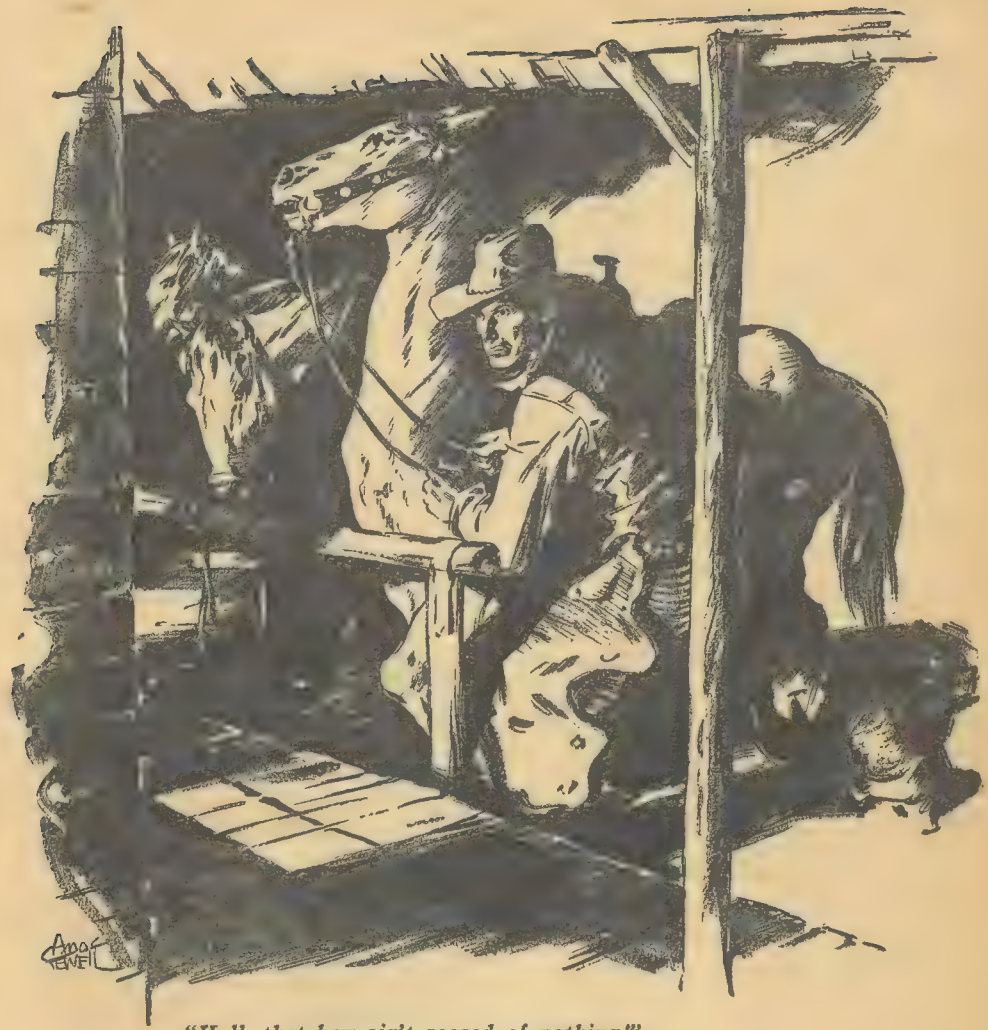
"Warren's killed! Powder's gone, all lost—"

On down to Charlestown Neck swept the rout, raked by cannon fire, and so across. The redcoats did not pursue.

And all the time, with the guinea cold in his pocket, with thought of Thomas de Coursey Sullivan cold in his brain, Ford heard himself saying, over and over:

"No, 'twarn't wuth it! It warn't wuth it—there'd ought to be some other way."

And a sob in his throat.



"Hell, that boy ain't scared of nothing!"

THE COMANCHE KID

by E. B. MANN

Third of Five Parts

"HE WASN'T big—but he was dynamite!"

That was Dallas Spain, who rode alone into gold-mad Comanche, trailing the masked desperado who was terrorizing the Shogun district.

Spain was a name with bombshell qualities in the Southwest. Angel Spain, Dallas' father, had been a reckless gunfighter who had killed his share of men, both before and after he became a peace officer. His name at this time was clouded by a tragedy that had shocked three states.

Two bodies had been found in an arroyo five miles from Angel's ranch.

They had been identified as the remains of two men who had been closing a deal with Angel for his land holdings. And now Angel Spain was missing with the money they were known to have been carrying—and a hooded bandit, who carried Angel's guns, was riding the owlhoot again!

Shortly after Dallas Spain had ridden into Comanche, the hooded man struck again, this time shooting Manning Doran, a rancher. And this time blind suspicions began to point toward definite, although contradictory clues.

For this time Dallas Spain accused Zimmerman, a rancher, of being in reality Jorgensen, who was supposed to have been murdered by Spain's father. The inference was plain. If Zimmerman *were* Jorgensen, then Angel Spain's charred body was one of the two discovered at Spain's ranch—and another man, masquerading as the dead man and using his celebrated guns, was the hooded bandit.

Zimmerman, however, appeared to have an air-tight alibi, and even Poe, the sheriff, could not give credence to such a fantastic accusation. And shortly something happened which seemed to put him definitely in the clear.

For in a Paystreak saloon, with Zimmerman in plain sight of a score of people, a shot from the dark, intended for Spain wounded Mac, the proprietor (and the narrator of the story). The gunman escaped—but not before he was seen through the window—and revealed as wearing a black hood!

Meanwhile, the ill-concealed enmity between Zimmerman and Dallas Spain was breaking out into deadly feud, aggravated by the uncanny skill each of them had shown at gun-fighting and with bare fists.

Sooner or later, that feud was to be settled—and all Comanche was betting on the outcome. It would be with lead or fists, but it would be settled for all time.

And suddenly, the betting was that it would be with lead. That was the day that Angel Spain fell in love with Paula Doran, who had been hand-picked for Zimmerman's future wife.

Meanwhile, in spite of almost daily forays, the hooded rider remained unknown and uncaptured, and rumors fanned the temper of the town to a blaze of dangerous proportions.

Who was the owlhoot murderer—the father of Dallas Spain, or an imposter who masked his crimes behind the name of a man he had killed?

CHAPTER X

"ASKING FOR TROUBLE"

GEORGE POE was my first visitor the morning after the Ascension robbery and I was surprised to see him. I'd supposed that Poe would be too busy sniffing clues to fool with me and I told him so. He growled at me.

"What clues? All the clues I've got are ones I've had for weeks. He was a big jasper, and he wore a black hood, and he packed a pair of fancy guns. Call 'em clues if you want to. Seems like to me that hombre don't play fair! He don't wear that hood, nor even the guns, except when I ain't around. How am I goin' to catch him if he keeps on actin' like that?"

"Tracks?" I suggested.

"Sure. Too damn many tracks. Yesterday mornin' those guys up at the Ascension uncover a glory-hole in their Number Two shaft. What happens? Every man-jack in Comanche, or damn near it, goes trampin' up there to see the gold. As if they never saw any before! Hell, the ground in front of that office is lousy with tracks. You think I'm loafin' on the job because I ain't out ahead of a posse somewhere, spurrin' a horse over a lot o' scenery, eh? Well, let me tell you. The only tracks I didn't

find up there was tracks leadin' away from town, toward the hills. Figure that out!"

I nodded. "So you figure that town's the place to look for him. In other words, that he's a local man."

"Local? Of course he's a local man! Listen! Any day since they began workin' the Ascension, except yesterday, a man could have held 'em up and got nothin' but maybe twenty-thirty dollars out of the petty-cash box. Oh, and maybe a nugget or two. Yesterday is the first day in the history of the mine when there was gold in any worthwhile quantity in the office. But yesterday they struck a pocket; took out a whole hatful of flake gold and nuggets. A fluke that wouldn't happen once in a hundred years. And yesterday's the day The Hood picks to pull off a holdup! How'd he know if he wasn't a local man?"

I shrugged.

"Speaking of tracks," I said, "what about the tracks the Johnson kid found back of the livery stable the day he found the hood?"

"I'll bite," Poe said. "What about 'em? I ain't one of these jaspers that can look at a boot-track and tell the color o' the man's hair that made it. Tracks is tracks, t' me. If a man's got a peg leg and goes walkin' in soft dirt I'm apt to notice it. If he's pigeon-toed, or walks with a limp, or has an extra leg or two, I might manage to notice *that*, too. I can even pretty generally tell which way a man's goin' by his tracks, providin' he didn't try to fool me by walkin' backward. But when he wears common ordinary boots, same size as maybe a couple o' hundred other men in town, and toes out like a white man, and don't limp—"

Poe shrugged.

Well, you don't usually have to hit me over the head with a club to make me take a hint. I gathered that tracks were something of a sore subject with Poe just then, so I dropped it.

"What's this I hear about Link Morgan leavin' town?" I asked.

"I ain't a mind-reader, either," Poe said patiently. "I don't know what you heard. Link's gone, if that's what you want to know. He didn't just innocently ride out to the D Slash to tend to the chores, either, like Paula tried to make me think. He sneaked. He swiped a horse one of the D Slash boys had left hitched in front of the Paystreak, and sneaked. Doggone that boy! A man'd almost think he had a guilty conscience."

"You did think that, not so long ago," I said tentatively.

Poe shot a sidelong glance at me, but he didn't say anything. Poe had a way of saying just so much and then not talking any more. Usually, what you got out of him was just what he wanted you to know. Spain had the same cool way with him. It irritated me.

Odd that Poe should mention Spain just when I was thinking of him.

"That Spain's another one," Poe said. "Goes ridin' every morning, I hear. Comes back grinnin' and lookin' wise and sayin' nothing. Damn him, I wish he'd talk. He knows a damn sight more than he lets on. . . . But he can fight." Poe's eyes lit up. "Man, you should've seen him last night! A lot o' jackasses booed him at first, figurin' he was running because he was scared. Hell! That boy ain't scared o' nothin'! Them same jackasses changed their bray, I noticed, when Spain cut loose. He took that Lyman Junction man in a mouthful, Spain did, and chewed him up and spit him out. I'd like to see him and Zimmerman tangle. To a finish, I mean. There'd be a fight!"

Poe wasn't the only man in Comanche to whom that idea occurred, either. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

POE was still smacking his lips over the thought of a finish fight between Spain and Zimmerman when I heard Spain's step on the stairs. I would have recognized that step anywhere. There was a crisp, quick quality to it that no other footsteps had, I thought.

He came in like a summer breeze.

"Hi, Mac," he said. "Hi, Poe."

"All hail the conquering hero comes!" I said. "Poe, meet the Comanche Kid."

Spain grinned.

George Poe stood up.

"Nice fight, Spain," he said. "I didn't get a chance t' tell you that last night. I enjoyed it."

"Thanks." Spain looked at Poe inquiringly, as if something in Poe's manner puzzled him. It puzzled me. Poe seemed to slide back into his shell.

"Anything you wanted to say to me, Spain?" Poe asked.

"Why, no."

"Then I'll be moseyin'. So long, Mac. Take care o' yourself. So long, Spain."

Spain watched him go, then looked at me and raised his eyebrows.

"Sorry if I busted up a private talk," he said.

But he was grinning before Poe's footsteps died away. "Well, Mac, how's tricks? Where were you when the lights went out? I mean, when the safe blew up? You got an alibi?"

I grunted.

"You think I need an alibi?" I asked.

"I wouldn't know. Poe's collectin' them from everybody else; I thought he might've come up here for yours."

"He didn't; but if one's wanted I can produce it, I reckon."

"I guess you could, at that," Spain said. He leaned forward, suddenly serious. "Look, Mac. Somebody said you used to own that safe; the one up at the Ascension mine office. That right?"

"Why, yes," I said. "It was in the Paystreak when I bought the place. When the town boomed, the safe got too small for me. A lot o' the boys leave their valuables with me, you know—money and trinkets. It got to where I didn't have room for my own stuff. So, when Bob Harvey put the new vault in the Comanche First National, I bought the bank's old safe. My old one laid in the back room of the Paystreak for a while; then I sold it to the Ascension outfit. For five dollars."

I shrugged. "It wasn't worth much more than that. The lock was stuck. Rusted, I reckon. It'd lock, all right, but it didn't take a combination to open it. All you had to do was to turn the handle a certain way, and shake it a little, and the door would open It was good enough to stop the ordinary sneak-thief, I reckon. Anyway the Ascension people thought so, and that was all they wanted; a box for their petty cash, and a fire-proof place for their books."

The look in Spain's eyes stopped me. He was staring at me as if he couldn't quite understand what I was saying. I laughed, a little angrily.

"Look here!" I said. "You don't think, just because I could've opened that safe, that I—"

"Oh, no!" Spain said. He grinned at me. "Don't be so touchy, Mac! I reckon plenty of people knew about that safe, far as that goes. You said it laid around in the back room for some time, didn't you? Only if this guy, The Hood, could open— Shucks! Forget it!"

But the subject stayed with him. He sat silent for a while, but when he spoke again it was about that safe. "So he wasted his time, and his 'soup', eh? All he'd have had to do was shake the handle. Well, I heard about a cracksman once who blew a safe when, all the time, there was a sign hangin' right on the door that said, 'This safe ain't locked!' He lifted the sign off and set it down on the floor and went to work. Maybe he didn't believe in signs."

"I got a place for you—down in my jail."

"'Soup'," I said. "'Cracksman.' You talk like a professional!"

Spain grinned.

He rolled a cigarette, lighted it, and passed it over to me. He was rolling another one for himself before he spoke again.

"I rode out to Zimmerman's mine the other day," he said.

"You did?"

"Yeah. Looks like to me it'd pay Brick to spend more time out there. When I was there, all four of his hired men were sittin' in the shack playin' poker. Playin' for keeps, too, it looked like." He frowned. "If I was Brick, I wouldn't pay anybody wages for playin' poker. Not in my shack, I wouldn't. It's downright sinful, poker is."

"You ought to know," I said. "Why don't you tell Brick his hired men are soldiering on him?"

"Maybe I will," Spain said. "On second thought, though, maybe I won't. They're real mean-lookin' characters, come to think of it. Maybe they wouldn't like my tellin' on 'em. One o' them jaspers—little fellow, this was; with a big mustache—I'd almost swear I saw his picture once. On a billboard. Somethin' about some sheriff wantin' to have a talk with him. My, my. The folks a man does have to rub elbows with in this world! It's right contaminatin'."

I laughed at him. "If you was to take all the men in this town that've had their pictures on handbills and lay 'em end to end," I said, "they'd reach from here to yonder. Anyway, nobody's askin' you to rub elbows with Brick's hired men. It's what you get for snooping."

He stood up, grinning. "It's a good sign, I reckon, you bein' so grouchy and hard to get along with. Means you're gettin' better. So long, Mac. Be seein' you."

He walked out then, not giving me a chance to answer him.

AFTERWARD, I remembered that there were several things I'd wanted to ask him. About the fights, for instance, and whether Paula was still sore at him, and what he'd meant by making her sore at him in the first place. Because whatever Link Morgan's disappearance meant—which was still another thing that puzzled me—it didn't mean that he was guilty, and I didn't think Spain thought it did. So why had he said what he did, knowing as he must have known that Paula would resent it?

But he was gone by then, and there was nothing for me to do but lie there and scowl at the ceiling.

Which is exactly what I did.

You know that brittle stillness that's in the air before a thunderstorm? It sounds foolish, I suppose, but I've always thought that I could scent trouble brewing the same way a man can scent a coming storm; by the feel of the air, the unheard whisperings of it. And I could sense it now. Things were brewing; pots boiling over unseen fires. Those fires had been already laid, perhaps, before Spain came. But his coming had set the blaze to them, and I could hear them simmering.

Zimmerman, faking friendship for a man whose death would have pleased him more than anything on earth. Link Morgan, damning himself by running away from a charge he wasn't supposed to have known existed. George Poe, pussyfooting in and out of little groups on Fremont Street, listening, saying less than he meant, biding his time. Spain, wearing that small secretive smile of his, riding out of Comanche in the mornings and back at noon, pretending blindness to the deceit Zimmerman was working on him, doing nothing when I had thought he would do a lot. And Paula Doran—

But that comes later. Paula wasn't one of my worries then. I didn't see her that day until late afternoon. And that was after Lefty Sullivan's visit.

There's something more than mere superstition in my belief that trouble makes a difference in the atmosphere. I've seen it happen time and again: men's nerves on edge, their tempers raw, because of a tension in the air of which they're not aware themselves. So Lefty's news increased my restlessness.

The town was fight-crazy, Lefty said. He was pleased as punch. There's been

three fist-fights last night and a couple more today, and one brawl that brought on a gun-play that would have ended in a killing if bystanders hadn't intervened, all caused by arguments about the fights. Part of it was just plain difference of opinion, but mostly it was because of one line too many Lefty had put into his handbills. The line about "Cowboy versus Miner for the Championship of Comanche County." That was asking for trouble, and it got it.

I don't mean that there was any downright feud between the miners and the cattlemen, but there was rivalry and plenty of it. There'd been betting on the fights, of course, and the miners had lost and the punchers weren't adverse to rubbing it in.

The way things were, the town was begging for more fights. Especially, the town was begging for one particular fight. "Brick Zimmerman's a miner. Put the Comanche Kid in with Zimmerman and see who's champion!" That was the way things were shaping up. Lefty didn't like that part of it; said it was crazy to talk about Spain fighting a man as big as Zimmerman. But he was tickled pink over the way his brainchild had caught on, and he figured the Spain-Zimmerman idea would gradually die down. He'd match Spain with some ambitious cowboy next time, and Zimmerman with a miner, and sort of let the factional part of it fade out.

But it was trouble, and I didn't like it. Whether it had anything to do with the main issues at stake or not, it was indicative of the temper of the town. I had a feeling that Comanche was nothing but a powder house with a fuse set to it, just waiting for a match to set it off.

As I said, it was late afternoon before Paula came. I knew something was wrong the minute she stepped through the door. Her face was white and set, and her eyes had a look in them that sickened me. She smiled at me, and asked me how I was, and all the time I knew that she was stunned and hurt almost beyond her strength.

She sat motionless for a little while, looking at me. Finally she said, "I'm glad you're better, Mac. Because now you can come to my party. Tomorrow night, up at Doc's hospital. Dad's the only patient there, and Doc said I could use the downstairs rooms. You see, it's going to be a big party, Mac. A real important party. I'm—announcing my engagement."

I must have looked a fool, all right. I felt my jaw drop down onto my chest and I hauled it into place again, slowly, before I spoke.

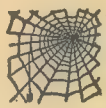
"Engagement?" I said.

"To Zimmerman," she said. "Please, Mac. Smile, now, and wish me happiness."

It would have been a futile wish. There was no happiness in Paula's voice, nor in her eyes.

CHAPTER XI

DEATH SENTENCE



IF IT had come a month or even a week earlier, Paula's announcement wouldn't have surprised me so much. As I've already said, Brick had been courting her.

No, I take that back. No matter when it had happened, Paula's announcement of her engagement to Brick Zimmerman would have surprised me. Brick had been courting her, yes. It had even seemed, sometimes, that Paula favored him. Brick was big and handsome and the life of the party, popular with all the girls; and he had money. Not that I ever suspected that that last item had anything to do with Paula's liking him. I always figured Paula was a little flattered by Brick's attentions, Brick being an older man than most of the boys she went with, and that she got a kick out of

showing she could take him away from the other girls.

Those were reasons I had figured out, at least; those and the old marry-a-man-to-reform-him thing. For Brick had a reputation as a hellion. He was a gunfighter and he was a gambler, and a heavy drinker at times, and he wasn't exactly a Galahad where women were concerned. Just the sort of man, in short, that women *do* marry to reform.

Not that I ever thought Paula would go as far as marrying him. In fact, I meant to see to it that she didn't go that far and I'd told Brick so. I could stop it if I had to, and I meant to do it if I ever thought it had gone far enough to need stopping. Brick had laughed at me.

Well, he'd laugh out of the other side of his mouth now, because this was the showdown and I'd do just what I'd said I'd do. No matter what it cost me personally, I wouldn't let Paula wreck her life on Zimmerman.

Paula was talking again and I forced myself to listen to her. No use jumping into this half-cocked, I thought. Maybe this is just some fool notion of getting square with Dal Spain or something. Girls do fool things like that.

"You mustn't tell anyone, Mac," Paula was saying. Her voice was low and oddly flat. "Nobody's to know until we announce it, at my party. It's a surprise."

"It's a surprise, all right," I said. "Look here, Paula I won't let you—"

She smiled a slow tired smile at me. "Hush, Mac."

"Damn it, I won't! If you think I'm going to stand by and see you wreck your life this way, you're crazy! I should've put a stop to it before now. I would've, only—well, I didn't think you'd be such a fool, for one thing. Look, Paula. Zimmerman is—"

"Bad? I know."

"But you don't know! You can't."

"I'm afraid I do, Mac. But it doesn't matter. It's what I've got to do."

"Got to? You don't have to do any such thing! You're just—"

She took my hand. "Listen, Mac. You remember this morning, when I told you about finding the money, I said, 'If you only knew how badly we needed that money!'? Well, when I said that I was thinking of—oh, a new suit for dad, new dresses for me, bills we could pay. Small, unimportant things. I didn't know, then, how desperately we really did need it, how much depends on—money. But I know now. It's bad of me to tell you all this. I should be brave, and swear I love Brick dearly. I did, to dad. But I don't love him. And I had to talk to someone. Mac—"

She tightened her throat and shook her head and went on stubbornly. "You're like one of the family, Mac. You'll never tell on me, will you?"

"But damn it, Paula! If it's money—Listen! I've got as much damn money as Brick has. All you've got to do is—"

"Marry you? I'd love to, Mac. Only. you see, it wouldn't serve the same purpose. It's Brick Zimmerman I've got to marry."

"Shut up! No, not marry me. I'm nearly old enough to be your dad. But if it's money you need, I'll give it to you. If I haven't got enough, I'll get it. For Pete's sake, Paula, what're friends *for?* Your dad has been like a big brother to me. I've loved you since you were knee-high, and before. You've been like my own daughter. Anything I've got is yours. You ought to know—"

"I do know, darling. And it helps, knowing. But it won't do, Mac. Money—isn't all of it."

Well, there's no use repeating any more of it. I begged and blustered, pleaded with her and swore at her, and none of it did any good.

She left me and I laid there and watched the glow of the sunset go out of the sky while I thought it through.

I GOT up after a while and wrote my will. I made Paula my sole and only heir, with Manning Doran as executor of my estate. The job of executor would be an easy one. Aside from the Paystreak, every dollar I owned was in cash or gold, saved up toward that horse ranch I wanted to buy some day. It wasn't in the Comanche First National though, except for a small checking account. Bob Harvey's bank was safe enough, but in a town like Comanche, where every man's business is everybody's, I didn't want my wealth, or lack of it, to be the subject of street-corner gossip and so I'd put my savings elsewhere. It was only a question of telling my executor where to find it. I did that and when it was done I felt at ease, like a man who has seen his duty and accomplished it. After all, I might die, at that. There's never any telling, as I said earlier, about a gun-fight. And Zimmerman was fast.

I dressed myself then and took my time about it. Pulling on my boots started my head to aching again, but that didn't matter. I put on my best black broadcloth suit and a white shirt and a fine plaid vest I'd always meant to wear but never had, and I took considerable pains with my tie and spent more time than usual brushing my hair. I hadn't noticed it before, but I saw now that I was getting a sprinkling of gray around my temples.

I left my gun to the last. When I was dressed, I picked it up and looked at it. I took the cartridges out and made sure the bore was clean and slipped fresh cartridges into the cylinder and spun it a time or two. It worked all right.

I slid the gun down inside my waistband and got it settled where I wanted it, and then I stood in front of the mirror and tried a practice draw or two. The gun came out as smooth as silk. Zimmerman would have to go some to beat it. I didn't think he could.

I walked down the stairs then and stopped in the hotel lobby to let the colored boy shine my boots. Several people stopped to speak to me and say how glad they were to see me up again, and I made the black boy hustle because I was afraid Doc White might come and chase me back to bed.

Spain was lounging against the Paystreak bar talking to Lefty when I walked in and the two of them gave me a welcome that made up for the ache in my head. It was past sundown, So I ordered a shot of Scotch and drank it neat. I was still fingering the glass, watching the film of liquor on it reflect the lamplight, when Zimmerman came in.

Spain must have seen Zimmerman coming before I did. I say that now, in the light of what I learned later. Then, Spain's sudden change of subject had no connection in my mind with Zimmerman's arrival. It should have, possibly. I had the clue. It had been given me in my talk with Spain a while before. But I was too intent on thoughts of my own to notice the devious workings of Spain's mind.

"I've been learning things about gold," Spain said. The talk had been about prize-fighting before.

Lefty looked at Spain inquiringly.

"Yeah?" he said.

"Yeah. A man was telling me today that an expert could look at a sample of ore and tell what mine it came out of. Said every vein had its own individual characteristics. Hi, Zimmerman."

Zimmerman's grin was cordial. "How's the Comanche Kid tonight?" Hi, Mac. Glad t' see you up again. Hi, Lefty. Slip me a shot, will you? Have one, Spain? You, Mac? How about a little game?"

"Suits me," I said. "Only maybe I'd better rig up a game of my own. The

way I feel tonight, poker's goin' to come high. No place for grocery clerks. You wouldn't like it, Brick."

I saw Spain look at me. Brick's face got red, but he passed it off with a laugh. "If it gets too stout for me, Mac, I'll holler. Until I do, don't worry about me."

"Speaking of gold," Spain said. "It's funny that different ores look different, like people. This jasper was tellin' me that ore from one vein'll lay in flakes, maybe, like fish-scales. Maybe another sample will show the stuff in thin lines like strands of hair. Another one'll take another form. He was telling me about one vein where the gold looked like honeycomb."

Zimmerman was listening but he wasn't interested. He was frowning, waiting to change the subject.

But Spain gave him no opportunity. "This man said he'd seen a lot of gold-strikes but this was the only one he ever saw where there was a digging that brought out different kinds of ore. He said there was one mine here you couldn't classify at all. One time the ore from that mine is just like the ore out of, say, the Nugget. Next time maybe it'll look like the stuff they get out of the Star. And so on."

Spain chuckled. "This jasper said if he didn't know this mine was a bona fide producer he'd think the owners were a bunch of high-graders stealin' ore from other mines and turning it in as their own."

Zimmerman was listening now. He stood completely motionless, his eyes on Spain.

"Which mine is that?" he asked.

Spain shrugged. "This jasper wouldn't tell me that."

Zimmerman poured another stiff drink and downed it before he spoke.

"You don't know much about minin', do you, Spain?" he asked.

"Why, no; not much."

"Neither did this jasper you was talkin' to. Either that or he was stringin' you. If he'd known much about minin' he'd have known that there's exceptions to that yarn he was givin' you. Take my diggin's, now. It's a glory-hole. That means it's a deposit of stuff washed down by some old stream—washed down off of maybe a dozen veins about it, see? So how would you expect the stuff I get, for instance, to be all alike? It ain't."

Brick laughed. "Why, hell, maybe my claim was the one this guy was talkin' about! You take my tip, kid. Stick to poker. You're better at that. What d'you say we get started?"

Olliphant came in and joined us, and Zimmerman saw George Poe and Bob Harvey across the street and called them in. That made the poker game, but I still couldn't figure out what was behind Spain's talk. It had looked to me as if Spain was prodding Brick deliberately. Zimmerman had seen it, but he'd chosen to pretend that he hadn't. Except for that, it might have ended in trouble. It was the sort of an insinuation that couldn't very well have been answered short of gun-play, and Spain must have known it. It made me wonder if he had heard about Paula's party and was playing the same game I was playing. I hoped not.

I GOT four diamonds in sight on the first deal. That gave me the whip, and I made use of it. I sucked Zimmerman in by betting just a shade more than I should have bet if I'd really had a flush and wanted a play out of it. Brick had a nice pair of jacks showing, and he raised me, telling the world he thought I was bluffing. So I laughed at him and tilted him a stack of blues. Brick folded up.

As it happened, I was bluffing. I had a black three-spot in the hole and, just to rub it in, I faced it so that everybody could see it.

"Nothing like a stack of blues," I said,

"for showin' up a yellow streak, eh, Brick?"

It was nasty, of course. I meant it to be nasty. Brick's face got red and he looked at me like he'd like to take a swing at me, and then he laughed. It wasn't very convincing laughter, but it served to ease the sudden tension.

Spain had scented a nigger in the woodpile when I made my first crack at Zimmerman, back there at the bar. I knew it from the way he'd looked at me. He didn't look at me this time, but I knew from the careful way he shuffled the cards and dealt that he'd got another whiff and was trying to figure what to make of it. Olliphant made some kidding remark and Spain joined in with him, saying something about this being no game for a couple of beginners like them and they'd have to take a firm hold on their pants or they'd be embarrassed going home.

Beginners? Well, I've played against professionals who could have taken lessons from those two. Olliphant didn't have Spain's flair for the game, but he knew cards and that big jolly face of his was as good a poker mask as any you'll see. Spain sat in his favorite seat, in the corner, with Zimmerman on his left and Harvey on his right. Poe was between Harvey and me, and Olliphant was on my left. That made Spain the next dealer after Harvey.

The game settled gradually into a battle between me and Zimmerman. That's what I intended it should do, and Spain and Olliphant and the others saw that and let us fight. I'd played poker with Zimmerman too much not to know him. I could read his mind. And I went after him. I badgered him, and bluffed him and beat him when he thought I was bluffing, and I caught him bluffing and laughed at him. And every time I'd make a crack at him I'd feel Spain's eyes on me.

Zimmerman took it longer than I ever thought he would. He kept getting blacker and blacker, but he took it. I think at first he laid it to the fact that I was feeling bad; that my headache gave me a nasty temper. Or something.

But I could wait. Zimmerman was losing steadily and he couldn't stand that; not for very long. Sooner or later he'd rebel. And when he did I'd kill him. That was the thing that I was playing for.

CHAPTER XII

TRIGGER VERDICT

IT WAS maybe an hour later when Poe dealt what turned out to be the biggest hand of the evening. After the first three cards, it narrowed down to Zimmerman and Olliphant and me. At that stage, I had a pair of aces in sight, Olliphant's hand showed the ace and ten of hearts, and Zimmerman had a queen and low. I bet and both men called.

It might be well to explain here that we played with a fifty-three card deck, the fifty-third card being the joker which was wild with aces, straights and flushes. In other words, the joker with an ace made a pair of aces; the joker with four cards of a suit made a flush, in which the joker counted as an ace; and the joker could be called any card that would fit with your four other cards to make a straight. On the deal, for instance, my pair of aces consisted of an ace and the joker. I had a deuce in the hole.

My fourth card was the five of diamonds. Zimmerman's fourth was a second queen. Olliphant's was a low heart.

I bet my aces. Zimmerman thought a while and then called. His hesitation didn't fool me much. I figured then that his hole card was also a queen, making him three of a kind, and that he

was faking hesitation on this bet with the idea of sucking us both in later.

Olliphant raised.

Well, some men will raise when they hold four cards to a flush, which is what it looked as if Olliphant had. But I'd never noticed Olliphant doing that before, so I figured he had an ace in the hole, making him a pair of aces with a ten to follow. The ten was higher than any card I had showing under my pair of aces, and Olliphant had the same chance to better his hand on the last card that I had. In which, the raise was good poker. I called—and Zimmerman raised.

Well, there wasn't much doubt then but what Zimmerman had three queens. It convinced me and it must have convinced Olliphant, too, because he called this time. So did I.

And my fifth card was a four-spot.

You see, that made me an ace, the joker, a five and a four in sight, with a deuce in the hole. I had a straight. But the hand in sight still looked like a pair of aces.

Zimmerman didn't better his three queens, but Olliphant caught the case ace. According to my figuring, that gave him three of them.

There's no use going into details about the rest of it. There was a flurry of betting, with everybody raising at first and then with everybody but me looking dubious. Zimmerman and Olliphant were both in the pot too deep to get out before they saw the possibility of my straight, and I took them for a ride. It nearly broke Brick's heart. I let him cry, which he did, long and loud, and then I said, "If there's anything I hate more than anything else in poker, it's a bad loser."

You could have heard a pin drop.

Brick shut up, same as the rest. His face got red and he leaned forward a little, his elbows on the table, and glared at me.

"Look, Mac," he said. "Take off the spurs. You been ridin' me all night and I'm damn sick of it. Don't go too far."

I could have forced the showdown then, but I didn't. I wanted it to come another way. I shrugged.

Harvey dealt and Spain dealt. It was Zimmerman's turn next, and when it came down to the last card I had a pair of nines showing and Zimmerman had an ace-high hand. I bet, and he raised. I looked as surprised as I could, and called. But when Zimmerman picked up the deck to deal I said, "I'd like to cut."

Spain was sitting back in his chair when I said that and I saw him straighten up. You don't call for a cut like that unless you suspect a man of crooked dealing; or, if you do, you make some sort of an apology about being superstitious or not liking the sequence of the cards, or something. I made no such apology.

Zimmerman grunted an oath and slapped the deck down on the table. I cut the top dozen cards off the deck and held on to them. Zimmerman picked up the balance of the deck and dealt. Neither of us helped our hand and Zimmerman folded.

Before I even reached for the pot I picked up the cards I'd cut off the top of the deck and looked at them. The second card—the one Zimmerman would have got if I hadn't cut—was an ace.

I said, "And you raised! Pretty sure of your own dealin', ain't you, Brick?"

It was a dirty trick, of course. Brick Zimmerman wasn't above stacking a deck, maybe, but he was no card-shark and he couldn't have stacked the deck that deep to save his soul. I knew that, and Brick knew that I knew it. Which only made it worse.

He said, "Damn you, Mac!"

And lunged erect.

I STOOD up, too. One nice thing about carrying a gun the way I do, it's close to your hands when you've got them on top of a table. I kept my hand close to my gun as I stood up, so there wasn't any doubt about my intention. I said, "Put up or shut up, Brick. I've called your play."

Brick went for his gun. He had to.

I would have beaten him. I'm just as sure of that as I am sure of anything. Zimmerman was fast, but I was faster. The only trouble was, both of us were up against a man who was faster than either of us. That man was—Spain.

Spain lunged forward hard, both hands braced against the edge of the table. I was opposite him and I was standing crouched a little, so when the table came against me it caught me belt-high. It blocked my draw. I tried to step back in the clear, but the chair I'd been sitting in caught my knees and tripped me. The table smashed into me again and I went backward.

But before I fell I saw Spain's hand hook over to the left in a slashing arc that drove his fist wrist-deep just under Zimmerman's ribs. I heard Brick grunt and saw him fold. He was coming forward, limp as a dishrag, when the table came up between us and shut off my view.

I heard Spain's crisp command to Poe: "Get Mac. I'll tend to Zimmerman."

I rolled, but Poe fell flat on top of me. He said, "You crazy fool! Give me that gun!"

I grinned at him.

Now that it was over and I had failed, I felt relieved. I'd tried. I'd done the only thing I knew to do for Paula. But it had been a dirty trick I'd tried to pull on Zimmerman.

Spain got Brick's gun.

George Poe had mine, and I was on my feet again before Brick was. I said, "I'm sorry, Brick. I lied. You didn't stack that deck, and I knew you didn't. I reckon I was just on the prod."

Brick scowled at me. "That's okay, Mac. Now you've said it was a lie, it's okay. You're sick; you ain't responsible. But *you*—" He wheeled on Spain. "I'm sick o' your damn buttin' in!" He swung his fist.

It was sudden; so sudden and so unexpected that Spain didn't have a chance to dodge. He tried to roll with the punch when it landed, but there was a crowd around us now and there wasn't room. Spain did manage to get his arm up, but Brick's blow smashed that arm back into Spain's face. It landed with terrific force; such force, in fact, that Spain was driven back against the men behind him hard enough to clear a path in which to fall.

He landed sitting and the jar of the impact shook the house. Brick jumped for him, but Olliphant tripped him. Somebody caught him as he fell and held him and flung him back into Olliphant's arms. Olliphant pinned him. They tussled for a moment and finally Zimmerman gave up.

Spain was up by then, watching them, and I happened to look at him. Spain told me afterward that he was hurt. Zimmerman's punch had driven Spain's wrist back against his throat. Spain said, "I've been hit before, plenty of times, but never to hurt the way that did. It made me crazy mad." I knew that then. I saw the madness in his eyes.

His lips pulled back across his teeth again, but I wouldn't say that he was smiling. His fingers hooked around his gun.

I said, "Spain! Don't do that!" But I doubt if he heard me.

He pulled the gun and held it out. Somebody took it. I saw Spain take a long deep breath.

"All right," he said. "Make room. Come get it, Zimmerman. You asked for it."

Brick laughed and charged him.

Olliphant tripped him again.

It was like a comedy; Zimmerman lunging, trying to get at Spain, and Olliphant tripping him.

Zimmerman didn't fall this time, either. He didn't have room. Because, instead of making room as Spain had asked them to do, that crowd had surged in on them. You see, the same idea seemed to hit every man there at the same time. Spain had hit Zimmerman once and knocked him out. Now Zimmerman had hit Spain. If that didn't make a fight between Spain and Zimmerman a perfect natural, nothing could. I saw it, and so did every other man there. They were grinning as they boxed Spain in.

"Hey, cut it out!" "Stop 'em!" "If they want to fight, put 'em in the ring together!"

You see? Don't ask me why a bunch of men would choose to see two men fight with gloves on, under Marquis of Queensbury rules, in preference to seeing them go to it with bare fists under the spur of rage. No matter why, I'm telling you what happened. Spain struggled for a moment, but he soon saw that he was licked, so he relaxed.

"Okay," he said. "Let loose of me."

THEY let him go. He'd cooled off now, so he could grin again. It was a crooked grin, and there was blood running down across his chin from a cut on his lip, but it was better than the way he'd looked before. He said, "I was a fool, I reckon, to lose my temper. Only, of all the damned ungrateful things! I saved his life, and he takes a swing at me!"

He said it jokingly, and the good humor in his voice brought an instant yelp of protest. "Hey, no fair makin' it up! We want our fight!"

Spain grinned. He started to speak but Zimmerman beat him to it. It had taken Brick that long to sift the meaning out of Spain's remark.

"You saved my life?" he said. "Like hell you did! Why, I'd have—"

He saw where he was heading and looked at me and I saw his face get red. He shrugged. "Never mind that. We'll settle this later, Spain. That is, if you don't run out on me."

"I won't run out," Spain said. "How does Saturday night suit you?"

"It's a date!" Zimmerman said.

And that's when I first noticed Lefty Sullivan. He'd come out from behind the bar some time ago, but the crowd had closed in and delayed him. He was fighting his way through all the time all this was happening and now he bobbed up squarely between Spain and Zimmerman.

He looked at Spain, then wheeled and swung his gaze around the circle of faces. His eyes were fairly flashing fire.

"You fools!" he yelped. "It *ain't* a date! Don't any o' you damn fools know anything at all about fightin'? Hell! Take a look at these two men. Spain weighs a hundred and sixty-five pounds. Zimmerman weighs—"

"It's all right, Lefty."

Spain said it soothingly, but Lefty wouldn't be soothed.

"It ain't all right! I won't stand for it, I tell you! I—" He broke up helplessly. He knew that he was beaten, and he was almost sobbing with the knowledge. "All right; go on! Be fools! *I'll* have no part of it! You count me out."

Spain lost his grin. He laid one arm around Lefty's shoulders. "Aw, Lefty, wait! I was figuring on havin' you in my corner. I'll need you. That's what I was counting on to make up for the weight I'm givin' away. Don't let me down!"

Now, I ask you: How could you help liking a man like that? Partly, of course,

he told the truth. It would help him, having Lefty in his corner. But mostly, I think, Spain saw that Lefty had said more than he had meant to say, that he'd have nothing to do with the fight, and that Lefty would be too proud to take it back. He'd miss the fight and that would break his heart. So Spain gave him a chance to eat his words without seeming to do so, by making it a favor to Spain. See what I mean?

Meanwhile, George Poe had been trying to get a word with me. I let him catch my eyes, finally, and he jerked his head toward the door. He said, "I want to talk to you."

Outside, he handed me my gun.

"Of all the damn, deliberate, cold-blooded things!" he grumbled. "Mac, whatever made you do it?"

"Deliberate?" I said.

He scowled at me. "Hell, Mac! Brick never stacked that deck. You didn't *think* he did. And even if he had—"

"It wasn't that," I said. "But—you know how Brick is. He talks too much. It just got on my nerves tonight—"

"And so you deliberately set yourself to rib him up to pull a gun on you so you could kill him." Poe shook his head. "It's no use lyin', Mac. You can't fool me. We've been friends for too long. Why?"

I told him then. I said, "To keep him from marrying Paula Doran!" After all, if Manning Doran had been like a brother to me all those years, so had Poe. We three had been—well, friends. If there's a stronger word than that I don't know what it is.

So I told Poe what Paula had said to me. When I got through, Poe said, "It's too bad Spain butted in. Here, Mac. Shake hands!"

Well, that helped some, but it didn't solve the problem for us. We sat in Poe's office and chewed on that problem most of the night.

CHAPTER XIII

TANGLED CLUES

THE next day, Friday, was one I'll never forget as long as I live. It was one of those days that stand out in a man's memory, each small detail sharpened and magnified out of all proportion to its size, the way your tongue will magnify and sharpen the tiny corners of a broken tooth.

The town was like a great seething stew-pot filled to the brim with explosive ingredients. The most obvious ingredient of all, of course, was The Hood. Who was he? When would he strike again? What was Poe doing about the last two crimes? Where was Link Morgan, and was it true as rumored that George Poe's deputies were seeking Morgan? If true, then why? Was he The Hood? Or was it Zimmerman, as Dal Spain had hinted that day after the Morgan-Doran hold-up?

Or was Swede Olsen the guilty man? If not, then why was he in jail?

My own affair with Zimmerman was another subject of considerable pro and con discussion in the town. Why had I "turned my wolf loose," on Zimmerman? And what would Brick do about it? Of course, Brick had apparently accepted my apology, but there were those who thought that Brick would never let the matter rest so easily. Such an insult, would, they thought, fester, and Brick would sooner or later operate on it, probably with gunpowder as the healing caustic.

But the central ingredient in all that sizzling stew was Spain. Spain, son of the Angel Spain, who was, to seven out of every ten of Comanche's mystery-solvers, unquestionably The Hood; Spain, with his flashing fists and ready smile; Spain and his coming fight with Zimmerman.

I'd never have supposed that Comanche, used as it was to tumult and shouting and robbery and sudden death, could so excite itself over anything less than a general free-for-all shooting fracas as it was excited over this forthcoming fight. I'd under-estimated the vividness of Dal Spain's personality.

For it was Spain who made the fight take hold the way it did on the imagination of the public. He was the under dog, for one thing; the little man going up against the big one; the David opposed to Goliath, without the sling. Too, there was a lot of curiosity about him because of his father—reflected glory, so to speak, from Angel Spain. But it was more than that. Men who began by being merely curious, or even antagonistic, toward him because of his father ended by liking him.

AND not only the men. Before the handbills announcing the Spain - Zimmerman fight had been on the streets an hour, Belle Holderness walked into the Paystreak and planked down five hundred dollars on Spain to win. She stayed there until the bet was covered, too.

Belle Holderness was madame of the White House, Comanche's highest-class honkytonk down on Willow Street. She was a big woman with a big voice and a bigger heart, and there was many a man, and woman too, in Comanche who—if they had known it, which they mostly didn't—had Belle to thank for a helping hand over some rough spot you wouldn't have expected her to know about. She played a stiff game of poker and smoked cigars and was a power in local politics. On the side of law and order, too, I might add in passing. I'll never forget the time she led a parade headed by her "girls", all dressed to the nines, to help vote a crooked county official out of office. The man left town, afterward. He couldn't face the laughter Belle's campaign had aroused.

I'll not forget, either, the little speech she made as she explained her bet.

"Don't get me wrong," she said. "I don't know Spain. He's never been in my place. But me and some of my girls saw him fight Slugger McCoy, and this is a little collection we took up amongst ourselves to bet on him. You wise guys that're talkin' so much about weights, let's see your dough. I bet on class!"

Zimmerman was nowhere to be seen that morning, but he appeared at noon and took his part in the festivities. Spain didn't show. Neither did Lefty. It was the first time Lefty had ever failed to be in his place behind the Paystreak bar when he was supposed to be there, which is another way of saying what an occasion it was. The barmen who did double duty to fill in for Lefty, told me that Lefty had taken Spain off somewhere to work with him, and I guessed that Lefty, dragged into this against his will, was drawing on his own ring-wisdom to map Spain's fight for him.

There wasn't any trouble, of course, about getting money covered on either fighter. All you had to do was take your pick and name your stake-holder. A lot of people picked me as stake-holder and the Paystreak safe was stuffed with cash.

It was in the midst of all this that we got word about the burning of the railroad trestle over Ten Mile Creek.

Poe had come into the Paystreak just a few minutes earlier and I'd just succeeded in dragging him away from the crowd long enough to ask him a question or two.

"What's this I hear about your holding Swede Olsen in durance vile?" I asked.

Poe grunted and scowled at me and for a minute or two I thought he wasn't going to answer. But then he grinned sheepishly and said, "Hell, Mac. You got to admit that Olsen and Morgan were the only ones we know about who knew Doran had that money. I played cagey with Morgan, and what'd he do?

We struck first and did our cursing afterward.

He ran out on me. I figured I wouldn't take any chances on Olsen, that's all. His gettin' noisy drunk gave me an excuse for lockin' him up, and I did it."

"That's all?"

"That's all," Poe said.

"And still no word from Morgan?"

"Nary a word," Pete admitted disgustedly. "Looks like he'd took wings and disappeared off'n the face of the earth, for all the tracks he left. I've had men lookin' every place I thought he might go, and he ain't been there. He ain't left the country I'd bet on that. He's hid somewhere, which means somebody's carryin' him grub and stuff. I thought at first it might be Paula. I even spent a day or so keepin' an eye on her."

He grinned sheepishly. "All she did while I was watchin' her was set with her dad and ride with Spain." He sobered suddenly. "Speakin' of that, what's Spain going to think of this party of Paula's? He's goin', ain't he?"

"I reckon so. He hasn't said."

"He know why she's givin' it?"

I shook my head.

IT WAS then that the station agent, Isaacson, came in and told us about the fire. The west-bound freight had discovered it, he said. The engineer had seen the blaze in plenty of time and had stopped just before the trestle buckled in the middle and went down into the canyon. The freight had backed east to the last division point and had sent a brakeman across Ten Mile to walk track to Comanche and tell Isaacson to hold the east-bound passenger. Isaacson said he'd already been in touch with headquarters by wire and the railroad was arranging to route passengers and freight over another road and back into Comanche from the west, so there'd be no question of any shortage of supplies. He'd been so busy on the wire, he said, that he hadn't had time to come up town to tell about the fire. Right now he was looking for Bob Harvey.

"He ain't in the bank, so I thought he might be here," Isaacson said, and turned to leave.

"Wait a minute," Poe said. "How'd the fire start? And what do you want with Harvey? He ain't suspected of burnin' your bridge, is he?"

"Hell, no," Isaacson said. "Nobody knows how the fire started. Or anyway the brakeman didn't. He thought it might've been from sparks from an engine, or maybe somebody dropped a cigarette, or maybe somebody built a camp-fire under the bridge and forgot to put it out. I'm looking for Harvey because tomorrow is clean-up day at the stamp-mill and the east-bound passenger on Saturdays—that's tomorrow—is supposed to carry the gold shipment and there won't be any east-bound train tomorrow. The mills insist on turning the gold over to the express company in order to relieve themselves of the responsibility and when I wired the express company about it, they told me to make arrangements with the local bank to deposit the gold for safe-keeping until we can arrange to ship it."

"I see," Poe said. "You ever think of goin' in for politics?"

Isaacson looked puzzled.

"I was thinkin'," Poe said, "that a man that can talk that long without takin' a breath ought to run for governor. You'll find Harvey down at the Elite Barber Shop."

Isaacson left us then and Poe stood looking after him.

"Now, I wonder—" Poe tipped his head and squinted up at me. "Coincidence, wasn't it, his tellin' us about the bridge bein' burned and then tellin' us how all that gold was due to be piled up in Harvey's bank because of it? All them nice, neat bars o' gold—five thousand, six hundred and eighty-four dollars worth in each bar, a feller told me. Take a dozen or so of 'em, they'd make a right nice haul, eh, Mac?"

I looked surprised, I guess, because Poe scowled at me. "You know, Mac, it'd be a cinch for The Hood to stick up Harvey's bank."

"He never has," I said.

"No. Maybe the reason he hasn't is that I've nagged at Bob enough to persuade him never to keep any amount of cash on hand. I've made it a point to see to that. Made quite a show, if you'll remember, of personally escortin' Bob's shipments of surplus cash down to the railroad station, just so nobody'd get any ideas that there was a wad of cash in the bank. But *now*—"

"If you feel that way," I said, "you'd better catch Isaacson and tell him not to spread the news any further than he already has. Tell Harvey, too."

Poe shook his head.

"You ever hear of lockin' the stable

after the horse was stolen?" he asked. "Seems like that'd be the way of it if I went chasin' after Isaacson now."

I stared at him.

"I'm afraid I don't get it, George," I said. "Maybe I'm dumb, but—"

"Not dumb," Poe said. "You just ain't had a job exactly like mine. What I'm scared of now is that that fire was no damn accident!"

CHAPTER XIV

SHACKLED JUSTICE

IT WAS long past sundown and I was already dressed for Paula's party when Lefty Sullivan came into the Paystreak. I was at the bar, listening to a man from Baltimore tell why a good little man never in this world could lick a good big man, when a whoop of laughter pulled my eyes toward the front door—and there was Lefty. There was a crowd around him and it was a minute or two before I could see what all the shouting was about. One glimpse of Lefty told me. He looked a wreck. His lips were cut and one eye was black and there was a purplish bruise on his left cheek, but he was swaggering.

I said, "I suppose you're going to tell me that you ran into a door!"

He grinned at me. "Nope. I just had a little difference of opinion with a buzz-saw, Mac. The buzz-saw's name was Spain. Where's Zimmerman?"

"I wouldn't know," I said. "What do you want with Zimmerman?"

"Just wanted to give him a good look at me," Lefty said pointedly.

That brought another whoop of laughter from the crowd following him. I didn't feel much like laughing, myself.

"Where's Spain now?" I asked.

Lefty chuckled. "He's up in his room, dressin' for the party; but if it's your idea to take a look at the other feller, you needn't. There ain't a mark on him. He's as hard to hit as a shadow. And can he punch? Say! I had to coax him some t' get him t' cut loose at me, but when he did—! Remember me askin' him, that first day, if that punch he landed on Zimmerman was an accident? Well, it wasn't. Mac, how much wages have I got comin'?"

"I don't know exactly, Lefty. I'll look it up."

"You do. And if you feel like lettin' me have six months or so in advance I'll take that, too. I got some plain and fancy bettin' t' do between now and this time tomorrow night. All right. What's yours?"

He had his apron on and was mixing drinks before he'd finished speaking. He was still mixing them, and still talking fight, when I laid a sheaf of bills in front of him and left him to walk up the hill to Paula's party. There was close to five hundred dollars in that sheaf of bills, and it was all due him; no wages in advance included.

But if I had known that Lefty was covering ten-to-one money on Spain to win by a knockout inside of five rounds, I never would've put up the cash. I'd have said he was crazy.

Paula met me at the door when I got there and she was wearing a white dress that made her look like the fairy princess out of some old nursery tale. She smiled at me, but I saw her lips tremble a little and the hand she gave me was cold. I held that hand and pulled her close to me.

"Listen, Paula. Don't go through with it. You don't have to. Whatever it is, give me a chance to fix it for you."

She shook her head. "Thanks, Mac. You and George Poe— You told him, didn't you? He just got here; hauled me off in a corner and scowled at me and said if it'd help any for him to kill a couple or six men for me he'd be glad to oblige." She tried to smile. "You two!"

she said. "I'm grateful. But no, Mac. Don't worry about me, darling. I'll be all right."

I SUPPOSE it would have seemed a little strange, that party of Paula's, to any one who wasn't accustomed to the country and to its ways. Doc White was the second member of the reception committee, along with Paula, and he was all dressed up in the frock-tailed coat he wore to funerals, his hair slicked down over his bald spot, his face shining and his right hand pumping out a welcome to everyone. Paula shared in the hand-shaking and then took care of the ladies' wraps. Doc's job was to hang up the men's hats and guns.

Not every man who came to Paula's party contributed a gun to the line Doc had hanging from the coat-hooks alongside the door, but most of them did. I didn't, because I wore my gun where it didn't show. Bob Harvey didn't, though I knew Bob was heeled. But the snub-nosed .44 he wore didn't show either, because he wore it in a holster under his arm. And there were a few—Parson Whitehead, and Sol Silverman and a few others—who didn't carry guns. But most of them—all of them who wore guns in hip-holsters, at least—shelled out.

One thing I remember about that party and parties like it is the smell of moth-balls and rose-water that went with them. You don't get that smell at parties now.

You would have called it a motley crowd, perhaps. We didn't have many social barriers in Comanche then, but those we did have were pretty high. There were mine owners there, and miners; cowboys, and their bosses; storekeepers, and their clerks. Sol Silverman was there, bowing and smiling and scrubbing his hands. He and Tom Olliphant were the only two men in full dress suits. Sol's was a couple of sizes big for him and it shone like a mirror and the boys always poked fun at him when he wore it. Sol didn't mind that; he liked it. Olliphant's fitted him like he'd been poured into it, had been made by a fine tailor, and made him look like a youthful, jovial senator; but the boys poked fun at him, too, and he didn't mind a bit more than Sol Silverman did.

There was ice cream and angel-food cake on big plates handed around by the colored boy who shined shoes in the Brill House, and as he handed you your plate he'd grin and wink and whisper, "Miz Paula say they's seconds in the back room, yuh heah? You finish this, you help yo'self."

It was an invitation that was meant to be accepted, and it was. Folks stood around, eating and talking, laughing a good deal, not splitting up into little groups over a deck of cards and a bridge table the way they do today, but enjoying themselves. Everybody went, sooner or later, to say hello to Manning Doran and to talk with him for a while, and Manning laughed with them. But I could see that there was strain behind his outward manner and I knew that Manning Doran wasn't as happy as he would have you think.

Spain came and I saw Paula greet him and then turn away from him to welcome other guests, and I thought I saw a hurt look in the youngster's eyes. I know that Paula's face was white.

Zimmerman came, wearing a fine new suit and a stiff collar and boots he'd had tailor-made for him. The way he hovered over Paula, and grinned, and acted as if he owned the place, I thought it wouldn't be necessary for Paula to make an announcement. I figured anybody could look at Zimmerman and guess.

I got pretty sick of watching that, so I went into Manning's room and sat down by the bed near an open window where I could smoke, and just sat there.

IT was while I was sitting by that window that I heard a thing that puzzled me. Four or five people were standing on the other side of Manning's bed, talking to him, but I'd got tired of listening to them and my thoughts were wandering, so I heard a thing I likely wouldn't have heard if I'd been paying attention to things inside.

The first thing I heard was George Poe's voice. It was pretty low, but the words came clear enough. "So it's you, is it? I've been lookin' for you; sort o' had a hunch you'd show up here tonight. Turn around now and put your hands up."

I looked outside. Poe was standing maybe six feet from the window, just clear of the shadow where the wall made an ell, as if he'd been waiting there and had just stepped out. He had a gun in his hand and the moonlight glinted on it.

The other man was further away from me, close to the wall and in the shadow, so I couldn't see his face. His voice came to me only as a murmur, a blur of sound in which no words stood out. But he was protesting; I could tell that much. The murmur was a pleading one.

His hands went up slowly and Poe stepped close to him. Poe stepped back again and I saw a second gun in Poe's left hand, so I relaxed. There was no use spoiling the party by making a fuss, I thought. Whatever it was, Poe had the situation well in hand.

This time the stranger's voice came through to me. "But damn it, Poe, I tell you I've got to see him! I've got to!"

There was something familiar about that voice, but I couldn't quite place it. Poe's answer was mild, chiding.

"Got to, have you? Well, now. That's too damn bad. Because it looks like you was goin' to have to wait. Can't have you go bustin' in on Paula's party, and you a fugitive. My, my. Think how it'd scare the ladies. March, now. I got a place all saved for you, down in my jail."

I watched them as they walked away from me, thinking that I might be able to recognize the man when he stepped out into the moonlight. But he kept his face turned, and I couldn't. He was a big hombre, but that was all I could see about him.

It was maybe an hour later when Poe showed up again and, after he'd said his say to Manning Doran, I spoke to him.

"Have a little trouble outside a while ago, George?" I asked.

"Trouble?"

"I heard you talkin' to somebody outside the window there. Sounded like you were makin' an arrest."

"See who it was?"

"No, I didn't. The voice sounded familiar but—" I shook my head.

Poe shrugged. "Just a drunk tryin' to crash the party," he said carelessly. "No trouble. He went along meek as a lamb."

I thought then that that didn't quite match up with what I'd overheard. The stranger's voice, what I'd heard of it, hadn't sounded drunk; and he'd walked straight, certainly. Too, Poe had called the man a fugitive.

It didn't fit, but I forgot it then because Paula was standing at the head of her father's bed, looking all flushed and breathless, and the room was full of people. More people were crowding around the door to the hall, and somebody was shouting, "Silence, everybody! Paula's got an announcement to make!"

Somebody said, "What's this?" close beside me and I turned. Spain was standing there, looking at Paula; but he shot a quick look at me as I turned and I shook my head at him.

I stepped back a little until I stood beside him and a little back of him. I wanted to be near him. I was sure now that he didn't know what was coming, and I didn't know how he would take it. But he must have sensed that it was

something he wasn't going to like because his face was grim. He wasn't smiling now.

Paula raised her hand and quiet came. We weren't six feet from Paula, Spain and I; just the length of the bed between us, with George Poe standing on the opposite side of Spain from me. Zimmerman stood at Paula's left, up by the head of Manning's bed.

Paula said, "I've asked you all to come tonight, all my dearest friends, so I could tell you all at the same time that I—that I'm engaged. To Douglas Zimmerman."

DOUGLAS ZIMMERMAN. The name sounded strange to me. I had to think twice before I remembered that Brick's name was Douglas. I had a queer desire to laugh at that.

I felt Spain jerk. I don't think Paula meant to do it, but as she finished speaking she turned her head a little and looked at Spain. Her lips were parted a little, and her eyes were big. She used to look that way when she was a little girl and would beg me to take her up in front of me on my horse. Seeing her that way, I didn't feel like laughing, after all. There was a lump in my throat the size of a hen's egg.

Spain surged forward suddenly, and I caught his arm. I heard him say, "Paula!" but I don't think anyone else heard it. People were already chattering, pumping Zimmerman's hand, congratulating him, making a fuss over Paula. But Paula wasn't noticing them.

Spain shook me off. I saw his jaw shut tight and I stepped forward. I went with him, because I had a queer feeling that anything might happen. Zimmerman was watching us, and maybe he had the same idea I did. He dropped somebody's hand and swung to meet us.

But nothing happened. Spain took Paula's hand and bent over it, and when he straightened again he was smiling. It was a twisted smile, not gay at all; but it relieved my mind. He said, softly, "I wish you luck, Paula. Luck, and . . . happiness."

It wasn't until we were outside, walking swiftly down the hill together, that I remembered that Spain hadn't said a word to Zimmerman. Neither had I, for that matter. We'd shaken hands with Paula, and with Manning Doran; then Spain had walked straight through that crowd and out the door.

Spain stopped under the Brill House balcony, and turned and looked at me.

"So," he said, softly. "That's why you tried to kill Brick Zimmerman!"

Somebody was running behind us, and before I could answer a small shape hurtled past the corner of the hotel and into us. It was a boy. I saw that much, but it took me longer to recognize him. He turned finally so the light hit his face, and I saw that it was Freck Johnson. He was panting and trying to talk at the same time.

"They're gonna kill you!" he gasped. "I was in the livery barn and it was dark and they didn't see me, but I heard 'em talkin'. There's two of 'em, and I never seen 'em before, but they're gonna kill you! I knowed you was at Paula's party so I went up there to' tell you, but I got my old clothes on and I didn't dare go inside, so I looked in at the window."

He stared at Spain. "Say! Does bein' engaged mean that Paula is gonna marry Zimmerman? I thought she'd maybe marry you—if you wanted her to, I mean. And then you left, and I had to run to catch you."

Spain knelt, his hands on the boy's shoulders.

"I did want her to marry me, Freck," Spain said seriously. "I wanted it a lot. Only don't tell anybody, will you? People would laugh at me for lettin' Brick beat my time. . . . And now what's this about somebody wantin' to kill me?"

(To be continued)

"It's easy to get trapped. . . ."

MAN POWER

by Robert Carse

IT WAS almost dark when Jerry Lewis came to the foot of the street and the scrap dock in Duluth, his worn seabag over his shoulder. Inside the gates a line of battered flat cars stretched on a siding which ended in a rusty, jagged mound of steel that towered high overhead. Beyond in the pale flush of the dusk he could see the ship he was on his way to join, lowered his bag for an instant and stood studying it. The words of the shipping clerk at the Lake Carriers Association hall up the street, and of the man who had hired him for this ship returned clearly, and he smiled a bit in memory.

He had been the only deep-water man, and the only man without experience in the lakes ships, among that group of several hundred there in the shipping hall. But Williamson, the master of this ship, the *Astarte,* had singled him out at the head of the stairs in the hall, and hired him after a few blunt sentences of interrogation. Then the heavy-set, stocky shipmaster in his neat salt-and-pepper suit and pearl-gray Stetson had turned abruptly away, clamping a fresh cheroot in the corner of his mouth as he told him to be aboard in twenty minutes, or else there would be no job waiting him.

The shipping clerk cleared his throat carefully after Williamson had gone

strutting down the stairs. "Fella," he said, "maybe you think you're lucky, and maybe you are. I heard what you and Williamson said. You got good papers, third mate and bosun for eight, ten years on deep water. You got your Dad and your Ma on relief out there in Nebraska, and you come here, looking for work in these ships, after you been out trying to help them along. And when you're down to your last couple of bucks and thinkin' about grabbin' a freight East for the coast again, you get hired. over a flock of regular lakers."

The shipping clerk blinked his eyes behind their spectacles and wagged his head at Jerry Lewis. "But that guy who just went down the stairs is one tough onion. And that *Astarte* of his is one tough packet. She's a big brute that carries steel scrap from here down to Lackawanna, on Lake Erie, and structural steel and railroad rail back up this way.

"Two guys were killed in her last year, in accidents, and two others a couple of years back. She's hard-workin' and man-killin'. Willy Williamson is just the guy to run her, and the owners know it, and run him the same way—hard. He ain't had another ship in seventeen years, and he don't want one; he takes pride in being hard. A lot of these boys right here in the room wouldn't ship with him, any style. That's why he hired you to ride bosun for him; he figures he can work you like he can't work them. But that's the scrap dock, right down there, at the end of the street, and the *Astarte* lyin' alongside of it. Good luck, son; I ain't kiddin' you when I say you need it."

POWERFUL cluster lamps bloomed in a white glare upon the masts of the ship now, fell across the high mound of the scrap heap in blinding brilliance. Jerry Lewis could make out the sharp, tortured ends of old automobile fenders, cracked motor blocks, shattered beams, and a conglomerate of steel odds and ends. Under his feet the planks of the dock were cracked and ragged; in that flare of light the whole place was desolate, the fragment of some distorted dream of destruction. Then, very suddenly, he saw and heard the great magnet, swinging pendant from its cable at the head of the derrick arm revolved out from the ship.

The thing was tremendous against the sky. It wheeled past his head, struck with awful force upon the edge of the scrap heap as slack was paid out on the cable. Sparks jetted in a scarlet, green and silver spray; bits of steel fragments and rust stung his eyes and face. The entire dock and the mass of loose metal trembled, and part of an old car wheel clanged right beside him. He hardly heard it. Bent down, he was running back to save his life.

Slack was being taken up on the cable; the derrick was swinging inboard towards the ship. A string of steel, ludicrously like a gigantic forkful of spaghetti, trailed from the magnet. Parts of it lost magnetic contact and fell, thundering on the main mass of scrap, crunching the dock planks or jouncing back with a roaring whip of vicious motion from the shipside and deck.

"Damn," Jerry Lewis whispered. There was the salt sweat of fright in the corners of his eyes and mouth. "Damn me to a quick and bright hell!"

He glanced at the shipside before him, red-leaded and dingy, and read there the letters of her name.

" 'Start-e'," he husked, "is right. Start-e, not stop-e. . . . Hey, aboard!" No answer came to his yell; there was no sound except that terrific clamor as, above the open hatch, the magnetic contact was cut and the linked jumble of steel went tumbling down into the hold. Aft, he could see a second derrick lick out, sling its mushroom-shaped magnet down onto the pile, swerve back and let go another lift to reawaken the thundering echoes. But a few feet down the

dock a white wooden ladder, what Lewis had always called a "farm ladder", was tilted against the shipside, its upper rungs flush with the main deck. He climbed it swiftly, yelling in warning as he came, his head turned for the veer and swing of the derrick and that murderous magnet.

Whoever handled the derrick did not hear him or lacked the time to stop the inboard sway of the loaded magnet. The lift of steel, alive with electricity and trembling piece by piece in its contact beneath the magnet, swung in awful shadow right behind his shoulders. He started to crouch, duck. Then, from out of the obscurity of the deck, a powerful hand vised at his jumper collar, heaved and hurled him headlong along the deck plates and into safety.

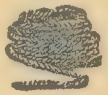
Even as he still rolled over and over, stunned and angrier than he had ever been in his life, he could see a piece of steel weighing close to four hundred pounds slip from the magnetic influence and come lashing down with frightful force across his lost seabag and the place where he had crouched a second or so before.

He got slowly to his feet. The derricks had stopped. The magnets had been lowered down on deck. In the cast of light men were staring at him, the lines of their mouths taut. At the ladder head, his Stetson hat pushed back a bit, a cigar in the corner of his mouth, Williamson, the captain of this ship, stood looking at him.

"You," Williamson said to him evenly, "almost got two things at the same time, young fella; a job on this steamboat, and a square o' land up there in the cemetery on the hill. Is that how a man comes aboard down on deep water, when there's loading?"

"I yelled," Jerry Lewis said, flexing his bruised knees and elbows, "but nobody heard me. I figured it was as dangerous to stay on the dock as come aboard."

"So." Williamson half turned his head to a slight figure in baggy, tattered overalls standing the the shadow of the after derrick rig. "This is the lad I'm shipping as bosun, mate. Take him for'd and put him on the articles. Show him where to bunk. Then turn him to on that cable job."



THE first mate of the *Astarte*, Jerry Lewis found, following him into the forward quarters of the ship to sign the articles, was a bald-headed little Scotsman with a mustache as thick as his accent and the name of Gilray. "Ye sign here," Gilray said flatly. "Ye bunk here. T'is a sma' room, but ye ha'e it all tae yeersel'. Turn to now; the captain would be tellin' me ye're a gude hond wi' a wire cable."

The cable, two-inch wire in a great, ragged snarl, was piled right aft of the break of the forward house and at the door of the quarters they had just left. The mate made a wagging motion at it with his peaked, bald skull.

"Ye'll put a long splice in that," he said. "Yon's spike an' marline an' toppin' maul. Quick wi' it, mon. We're turnin' to wi' both rigs again right after supper; we're sailin' before dawn, when th' last o' the load's aboard. Ye want for a bit o' gear, come tae me, in the after rig. Dinna ever bother Williamson. He's aboot the decks a deal, but he's no mon tae be bothered. All th' botherin' here is left tae him."

The wire was tough, the strands fouled and twisted. The marlinespike was dull and bent, the light here, away from the rigs and the long open hold, bad and uncertain. Jerry Lewis's hands had softened a bit in the months he had been from the sea, and it was no job to be done without leather work gloves. Blood was all along the turns and tucks of the long splice and down the front of his jumper when he had it done and heard the chime of four bells from the clock in the pilot house overhead.

The rigs had stopped aft, the magnets

down on deck, and men passed by him at the trot. One, a tall young fellow with a broad Scots burr to his voice, turned to call at him. "Lay aft for your chow, man. The lad who's late in this ship don't eat!"

In the little cubby of a room the mate had shown him and where he had dumped his seabag he hurriedly washed his hands and shed the blood-spattered jumper, swiped his hair back on his head and started aft. The rigs, he saw, passing along to the afterhouse, were built much on the fashion of land-going steam shovels, running on wheels under their own electric power upon rails set in the gunwales of the long hatch. The deck plates, the gunwales of the hatch and the side bulwarks were battered, bent and nearly split in places by the fall of loose pieces of metal such as the one which had nearly killed him when he came aboard. There was work here, plenty of it, for a good bosun.

The industrious clink of knives and forks against thick plates stopped him at the first door of the afterhouse, and he found half a dozen men in dungarees and singlets seated around a mess-table. He began to step to the end of the bench.

"Not here, Jack," one of the men smiled at him, waving his fork. "The bosun in this one eats with the skipper and the mates. Keep on goin', right around the house to th' fantail. And snap it up, if you wanta eat."

The door at the after side of the fantail was shut, and the legend over it read *Saloon*. Rather cautiously, not fully believing the words of the man in the mess-room, Jerry Lewis turned the knob and stepped within. A steward in a white jacket stood with his back to him, a napkin across his fore arm. Cut glass and big mirrors set in the bulkheads glittered over the buffets on each side. A white cloth was upon the long fore-and-aft table, and at the head of it, facing him, sat Williamson, his mates and wheelsmen and watchmen towards the middle and the chief engineer at the foot with his staff.

Williamson had taken off the pearl-gray Stetson; it hung from a peg behind him on the bulkhead. A napkin was stuffed into the points of his high collar, covering his flowered tie and shirt from possible stains. Instantly, his hard, quick eyes rose to where Jerry Lewis waited beside the steward at the door. Then in his strangely soft voice, he spoke.

"There's a couple of things you got to learn right now, bosun. One is a man who eats aft in a lakes ship wears a coat and tie when he comes to meals. The other is a man gets to chow on time, or he don't eat. We work six-and-six in these boats; no three watches. We got no time to waste. So get for'd and get a coat and tie on you, quick."

The rage flared abruptly in Jerry Lewis, uncontrollable and violent. "Mister," he said, trying to restrain his voice. "I haven't got a coat and tie. I came aboard here schooner-rigged, off the beach, like you know. I'm sorry I'm late."

Williamson slowly put down his knife and fork. "Then get to hell out of here until you have," he said. "This is the way I run my ship."

The steward, a little man with a round belly and a sweet whisky breath, opened the door for Jerry Lewis. "Take it now, an' like it, bosun," he whispered. "That's just his way. Slip around to th' galley, down th' starb'd side here, an' I'll see ye're fed."

Jerry Lewis cursed out loud when he was on the open deck. His fists were gathered, and it was all he could do to keep himself from going back into the saloon, yanking that heavy-set, soft-voiced man up from his chair, then letting him have it with both hands. But he was able to mutter to himself. "No, nothing doing. Stick with it. The folks in Lincoln need the dough, so what the hell. . . . And you're going to like this

new skipper just dandy—unless you beat his damn' head in!"

IN the hours since six o'clock, up until nearly midnight, Williamson and the little mate, Gilray, had found a score of odd jobs for him around the deck. There had been an ache up through the back of his legs right to his brain when he turned into his narrow bunk. Now, with the man's hand against his shoulder and the familiar words, "On deck, bosun," in his ears, Jerry Lewis found that the few hours of his sleep had done him little good, and that the stiffening ache was still there.

The man who had called him stood by the door of a small room, the magnificent breadth of his shoulders almost blocking it, the electric bulb on the bulkhead glancing over his handsome, youthful face and curly red hair. Jerry Lewis blinked at him as he hauled his shoes on and pulled the laces tight. "What are you in this packet, Red?" he muttered.

The big, red-headed boy grinned at him. "Deckhand," he said.

Jerry Lewis stood straight and took up another notch in his coir belt. "How many they got?"

"They got me," Red said. "That's all. I had a partner, but they made him a deck-watchman yesterday, after they hired you. He turns to with the mate's watch and stands lookout and relieves the wheelsmen when we're out in the lakes. He helps tend the rigs and discharge and load cargo when we're in port. You and me, I guess, will get all the regular deck work between us now."

"That's damn' nice," Jerry Lewis said. "That's awful kind." He was throwing cold water in his face, rubbing it vigorously with a coarse towel. "Looks like that's a lot."

"She's almost a thousand feet long," Red ventured. "And she needs soogey and scraping and paint to beat hell. But listen, bosun; the Old Man's already topside, getting ready to pull out. He's waiting to see you up in the pilot house."

"No time for coffee, huh?"

"Nope; not in this one." They were striding towards the door out onto deck now, and Red gave him a smiling sidewise glance. "This one don't run no excursion style, bosun."

"I figured that," Jerry Lewis said. "How long you been in these ships, Red?"

"This here's my first," Red admitted. "See, the Old Man and the second mate and all the guys on his watch, and the chief and all hands below, come from Marine City. That's a little place down on the St. Clair River, and the high school there had a heck of a good football team last fall, so—"

"—So Williamson," Jerry Lewis broke in, "hired you, instead of some old-timer who'd refuse to have his ears worked off. Maybe I ain't right, but I think you'd ha' been better off back with the pigs and chickens, Red. Doesn't this mate, Gilray, have any say in the ship?"

"Him? No. See, there's a flock of overtime and stevedorin' money paid out when they're loadin' and dischargin'. So the mate does nothin' much but stand his watch and handle cargo in port. Him and his two wheelsmen and the watchman are all Scotties, guys from over in Canada who got themselves naturalized in the States. Gilray's an okay fella, though; he just does his work and lets Williamson run the ship. The Scotties stick to themselves, and all the rest of the fellas, too. I guess she's a funny sort of a ship, bosun."

"Yeah, I guess," Jerry Lewis said. They had come to the deck abaft the house and he was staring about him. Hatchboards were being flung on and tarpaulins secured. The big rigs which had made his hours of sleep a broken, uneasy doze filled with shock and reverberating sound had been backed up

fore and aft, the magnets shipped in the holds, the derricks and the rigs themselves stoutly made fast. He turned and looked up topside.

Williamson stood right above him, at the after rail of the little strip of deck about the rounded pilot house. He held a megaphone in one hand, an unlit cheroot in the other, wore the same suit and hat. His lips briefly twitched as he gave Lewis a bleak smile.

"The boy tell you all you wanted to know, bosun?" he asked. "Laugh later, if you find this one funny. Get on the dock now, and carry those spring cables along. We're shoving off. You and Red will handle the dock lines. Come aboard when I tell you; the kid will show you how. Soon as you can run one of these winches all right, I'll use you aboard at sailing time. But they're finnicky, and you seem a guy quicker to talk than to learn. Get on the dock!"

Jerry Lewis stared aft again, at the length of the bulky, awkward ship and then the scrap-heaped dock. "Where's your tug, Cap'n?" he asked.

Williamson cursed him quickly. "Right under you. We don't use any tugs out here to clear a dock. We use a little steam and man power. That's how these packets are run. Now, shove off!"

THERE was no more than six inches clearance between the dock edge and the jagged, cruel mountain of the scrap. Some of the dock bollards were almost entirely obscured by raw chunks of metal, and in several places it was necessary to mount the scrap pile itself and take a lead to a bollard at the far end. Jerry Lewis ripped chunks from his shoes, his trousers and legs and hands as he hauled and changed those cables with young Red. On the ship, the massive deck winches were turning over with a full head of steam, the valves wide. Ten and fifteen fathoms of cable at a time dragged taut and drumming between ship and dock before the vessel moved free in the slip and began to take on sternway.

Jerry Lewis was wet with perspiration and breathing through set teeth before he heard Williamson's whistle blasts of warning and saw young Red turn further on down the dock and wave his hand to him. He cast off the eye of the cable he handled, watched it snake through the water and up through a chock aboard, then started scrambling over the scrap to where Red stood poised.

The same white farm ladder was being thrust over the side, held flat at the inboard end by Gilray and one of the big Scottish wheelsmen. "We got to hop that," Red husked to Jerry Lewis. "That's the way we go aboard."

"Hell!" Jerry Lewis said.

"Yeah," Red said; "they lost a fella that way between the ship and the dock, a couple of years ago. He slipped, down through the ladder rungs, an' the ship crushed him. . . . But you want me to go first?"

"That's it," Jerry Lewis said. His jaw muscles were bunched in hard knots. "Go ahead, kid. I'll hop it last."

The boy was lithe, and superbly strong. His hands caught the ladder end as the ship went swinging past at close to six miles an hour. His elbows and knees hooked; he was up and on, sliding down over the low gunwale to the deck. Forward, in the short bridge wing, Williamson leaned over and bawled, "Be quick, you! We ain't got all night!"

"Brother," Jerry Lewis promised in a whisper when he had made the leap and was crawling inboard along the ladder to the deck, "I haven't known you for fourteen hours, but I hate your guts right now. As soon as I get the folks back in Lincoln off the beach, you and me are going to meet uptown in one of these clamshell ports, and then I'll show you who's quick, and does the talking. You, and your cowboy hat!"

IN the days and months that followed that night, Jerry Lewis worked harder than he ever had in any other ship. The *Astarte,* as the shipping clerk in Duluth had advertised her, was a tough packet. Out on the lakes, between Duluth and their usual final port of call, Lackawanna on Lake Erie, he was steadily occupied with the endless tasks of his deck work, and had only young Red to help him the major part of the time. In port, the interminable loading and discharging went on, all the other men of the deck force occupied with that, the ship a bedlam of sound and movement.

Instantly, the moment the ship was loaded or emptied, Williamson drove her on to her next port. In five months, Jerry Lewis got ashore six times, and then for periods of no more than two hours. There was just too much work, too many duties, and the sharp fact of sailing hour to hold him back from any real pleasure or relaxation.

He spoke of that once to Red as they stood slapping white lead on the freshly soogied afterhouse side while the *Astarte,* top-heavy with her peculiar rig and shallow draught, headed up Lake Superior towards the terminal ports through a keen offshore breeze which had in it the tang and smell of firs and balsams.

"I've got three hundred bucks in a pile now," he told Red. "I'll be jumping this one soon, before the end of the month and the time he ties her up for the winter. I'm heading East, for deepwater; my folks are straight now, and on their feet. Before I go, though, Williamson and me are going to meet on the dock somewhere.

"He knows how busted I was when I came aboard. He knows how much jack I've been sending home, an' how much it was needed there, and what chance I'd have of catching another ship out here. Maybe, with a pair of black eyes hung on him, he'll be a bit more human."

Red shook his head and scowled. "He's a tough kind of guy for that sort of stuff, bosun. No man in our town ever saw or heard of him bein' taken over. See, he ain't given a damn for anybody much since he lost his wife and kids a long time back. He owned his own ship then, and his twin brother did too; they had a little kind of company, and they were making good money.

Then his wife and kids put out from Detroit aboard his brother's ship, to meet him and go aboard his ship when he came down from the Soo from up here. That was the time they had the big gale, and all those ships were lost. His brother's ship went down, with all hands—wife and kids—ever'body. This fella lost his own ship, too, but he got his crew off all right. He found out at the Soo what had happened to his brother's ship. After that, folks say he ain't cared for anything. He drives all hands hard, along with himself."

"Just a little too hard," Jerry Lewis said. "Sometime, some of that man power he talks about is going to kick back on him. What happened to him years ago is just bad news no man can help. Hop to it now; we'll be going in alongside at Superior before noon, and those derricks got to be rigged."

"You're no easy kind of guy to work for yourself," Red told him, smiling.

"No," Jerry Lewis said, his eyes narrowed a bit; "I ain't ever been known for that."

THEY had worked for nearly two days and two nights unbrokenly in Superior discharging their load of railroad rail, then shifted over to Duluth and the familiar, grim dock, immediately begun loading scrap for the return voyage down to the lower lakes. All of them were jumpy with lack of sleep and exhaustion when the last lift was brought aboard, sent crashing down into the

hold. Williamson yelled at them in impatience as they secured the rigs and derricks and the hatchboards, already standing at the pilot house door with his megaphone in his hand.

"On the dock, Red!" he bawled. "That leg's all right. Get along with him, bosun. You know that job as well as any, and the mate can run the winch. Quick, will yuh, man? D'yuh think we got all night?"

Jerry Lewis was stumbling with weariness, too tired even to look up or think of an answer. Then, at his side, young Red lurched into him going over the gunwale, and he caught him by the shoulder. "What's the matter with you, kid?"

"I turned my ankle bad, coming down that lousy dock this afternoon," Red muttered. "I tripped, and kind of hurt my ankle and this wrist. I'm okay, though, bosun. Don't argue with the Old Man for me. Hell, some real sleep will look good when we're out of this place."

Jerry Lewis was never precisely sure of what happened on the dock in that bleak, fog-filled hour before dawn. Young Red was just killed, trapped and crushed between the side of the dock and the moving shipside when he slipped from the ladder; that was all. He, Jerry Lewis, was quite close to the boy when it happened, awaiting his own turn to grasp at the dangerously balanced ladder and swing up aboard.

Somehow, as he mounted the ladder end, Red slipped, made clumsy by his wrenched ankle and wrist, lost his grip for an instant on the side pieces and rungs, tried to catch hold again, then was gone. Jerry Lewis could remember that: the boy's hoarse scream and his white upflung face as he dropped down into the narrow black chasm where the ship side already scraped grinding. He yelled himself, and knelt, peering into the blackness, stretched out as far as he could reach with his empty, aching hands.

But there was no clear sound, and no other scream. The great weight of the moving ship jarred the dock and the piles beneath it, slid on, with a kind of slow, awful majesty towards the open water. Jerry Lewis looked up once. The pilot house of the ship had come right abreast of him; he could see Williamson's face, and knew Williamson had heard and understood, was moving to check the ship.

Then Jerry Lewis got to his feet and dived, down into the black and lapping water. The ship's bow plates grazed right past his head and knifing hands. He found nothing there, although he dived many times. He was dazed, choked with the dirty water and paddling about in wild circles when Williamson and Gilray came upon him in a lifeboat oared by the two Scots wheelsmen.

"You louse," he croaked at Williamson after they had lifted him into the boat. "You murdering louse." Then he struck Williamson squarely in the face, and dropped over unconscious across the floorboards.

IT was many hours later when he came back to consciousness. Through the port of his little room the late fall sunlight slid across his face and eyes, and he could feel a weird, irregular thumping and repeated vibration all through the ship. He rose, not all his thoughts clear yet, and stared out the port. The ship was running in narrow waters, through a river; the wooded banks, flaming scarlet and orange and vermillion, were close aboard. From aft the whistle blared as the wheelsman swung her head at the bends. Slowly, he went to the door.

Gilray, the first mate, sat on the bench in the short passageway outside, the log book balanced across his knee as he wrote. He stopped the pen and looked up and nodded when Jerry Lewis came towards him. "I'm glad ye're on yer feet again, mon," he said.

"Ye feel all right? The skipper asked me tae ask ye that."

"I'm all right," Jerry Lewis said flatly. "Where's this?"

"The St. Clair River, mon. Ye ha'e been asleep solid fair a long time. The doctor in Duluth gave ye an opiate tae keep ye sleepin', and he did a gude job o' it."

"Yeah. But what happened to the kid, to Red?"

Gilray closed the log book and put it down. "Dead, bosun. They did no' even find his body. The police looked for it, an' the port people, after them. The police could say nothin' about it except an 'unfortun-ate an' un-avoid-able accident in line o' duty.' T'is Williamson's idea the boy was wrong tae go on the dock wi' a bad ankle, like that. He says he did no' understand the lad was so lame."

"That's all?" Jerry Lewis asked, the rage so cold, so deep, he was not yet really aware of it.

"All for the moment," Gilray said. "Except it's a gude time for ye tae be back on yeer feet again. All the bad luck has come t'gether. Up the lake just noo, we come across some bit o' derelict gear, a submerged log, maybe. No matter what, it's stripped a blade from the propellor. Ye can hear the thumpin' and poundin' aft?"

"Enough," Jerry Lewis said, smiling, "to tear the main shaft or the bottom right out of her in a couple of hours more if he keeps on running her like this."

"Aye," Gilray said scowling. "Ye've called it right, bosun. But Williamson is runnin' her for Detroit and the dock whilst the other blades an' the main shaft hold. We got news in the Soo; there's a special cargo and a bonus for all hands if we can make Buffalo an' load and then hit Duluth again within sixteen days. He asked me tae sit here an' wait for ye. He's got ideas as how tae lighten ship an' get at that propellor when we make Detroit."

"To hell," Jerry Lewis said, deliberately, "with Williamson. And to triple hell with his ship. I'm leaving him and her as soon as she makes the dock."

He turned then, for Gilray was speechless, his mouth slack, and went back to his room, shut and locked the door. He stretched out on the bunk and tried to close his eyes, but he could not sleep. The thump and beat of the injured, laboring propellor was through his thoughts, and the face of young Red in that instant when death had closed blackly in and over him. His hands clenched and stayed that way. He stared at the bulkhead and the shift and glance of light through the port with unseeing eyes. Williamson, he thought, Williamson had forgotten, but there was a price for man power yet. . . .

AT the head of the ladder leading down to the dock in Detroit they faced each other for a moment. "I want my money, Mister," Jerry Lewis said. "I'm leaving this one."

"You'll get your money," Williamson said, "when I'm ready to give it to you. You leave this one when I'm ready to have you, and not before. Turn to; we're going to load for'd and bring her head down so the diver can get at the propellor."

"Bilge," Jerry Lewis said, carefully keeping his hands at his sides, then went over the side to the dock.

There was a bar a few blocks up the street where he and Red had come for a hurried beer from time to time. He stood there and drank whisky neat, staring at his reflection in the mirror, although it was that final vision of Red which danced before his eyes.

He put a bill down on the bar beside his glass when he had had his fifth drink, swung swiftly towards the door and the dock. He wanted Williamson now, he thought; he wanted his hands on that man and nothing else.

They had brought the ship well down

by the head when he got back to the dock. The fantail was high in the air, and a knot of men from the crew stood about the air pump, spelling each other in pairs at the monotonous and yet rapidly wearying labor on the long pump handles. A hospital ambulance was drawn up at the ladder foot amidships and he stopped there for an instant. The driver stood by the rear step, looking in with a practiced glance at the darkened interior.

"Three of them, just like that," he offered to Jerry Lewis, snapping his fingers sharply. "This skipper here was hurrying them up with the loading. One of those magnets slipped and the cable snapped—zowie! The loose end caught the chief mate on deck, broke both his arms. Then it kept on going and took a smack out of the two Scotties up on the rig. One didn't get much, just a quick crack out of it, but he broke his leg jumping clear. The other guy got knocked cockeyed; he got caught square. You in the crew?"

"Yeah," Jerry Lewis said, almost unaware that he had pronounced the word. "Where's Williamson, the skipper?"

"Aft there," the ambulance driver said. "They got a boat over the side, so they can send down the tools for that diver. Believe me, fella, it must be cold in that river right now."

Jerry Lewis could see Williamson crouched on a thwart in the lifeboat at the stern of the ship when he moved along the dock to where the pump gang worked. A plank stage had been rigged from the fantail of the ship, weighted and lowered down to the injured propellor still eight or ten feet beneath the surface. Heaving lines to which were belayed the various wrenches and tools the diver might need at his work below were strung along the boat gunwale.

Williamson tended those lines himself, answering the jerked signals of the diver with a calm, certain rapidity. Poised at the ship's taffrail, slung and ready to be lowered, was the jury propellor blade, ready to replace the one which had been smashed as soon as it was freed and cast loose. In one quick and instinctive glance Jerry Lewis took in all that. Williamson, he was forced to admit, knew his job; this was being well done, as well as possible under dangerous and hurried conditions. The same kind of conditions, he remembered, that had killed young Red.

The diver came up right beside the lifeboat, was hauled aboard by Williamson and the two watchmen helping him. While Williamson worked at the great collar nuts of the diving helmet the watchmen brought the boat alongside the dock. The diver's face was blue, pinched with cold and exhaustion when the helmet was lifted from his head. He did not speak until he stood on the dock with Williamson. Then he raised up for scrutiny the bloody stump of a forefinger, lopped neatly off at the first joint.

"No more," he said to Williamson. "Not for me, Mister. It's close to freezing down there, and getting dark; that current plays hell. That's how I got this. . . . A few more turns, and that old blade will be free. But then the new one has got to be shipped in place. And I'm not going back; not for fifty bucks an hour. You'll have to wait until the shipyard's free, then put your packet in there, have the job done in the open."

"No," Williamson said; his voice was slow, and soft. "I can't wait for that. I hired you, because they told me by wireless this morning out in the lake the shipyard wouldn't be free for a week. I'm willing, though; I'll meet your price of fifty bucks an hour."

"Like hell," the diver said. "I'm going home to bed. Pay me now, Mister, for what time I've got, and we're square."

SILENTLY Williamson took a wad of bills from his pocket and dropped them down. Then he swung and faced the men behind. His eyes ran across Jerry Lewis's face, but his expression did not

change, and his words seemed to be directed to all of them as a group.

"You've heard this fella," he said. "You know the job, and just how tough it is. But you work for the ship. You know the bonus we stand to make if we can get that new blade shipped, make Buffalo and get back up the lakes in time to deliver the cargo waiting for us. The owners are about broke; they got hardly any money. It's the shippers who're willing to pay that bonus if we get the cargo North, and to sign a contract for all next season if we can deliver now.

"That means jobs for all of us, next season, instead of the ship probably being tied up all summer, while we stay on the beach. I'm not asking any of you to put on this fella's diving suit to go down there and finish that job. But I'll pay thirty-five bucks an hour, out of my own pocket, for the man who does. This fella's been getting a straight twenty-five an hour up to this, like you know, and he's the one diver anywhere around here now."

They were wordless there; none of them answered him until the paunchy chief engineer spoke up. "The boys here are all tired, skipper," he said. "They all been working hard aboard, and here on the pump. It takes a fresh man for that job, and one who knows just what he's about. Kind of an easy thing to get yourself trapped, down under there in that mess of lines and gear on that stage."

Williamson cursed, at all of them. With a deliberate flip of his tremendous hands he lifted up the brass diving helmet, attempted to lower it into position on his head. "No fit for you, Mister," the diver sourly advised where he sat bandaging his lopped finger. "That was made special for me, and a smaller man. The way it'd set on you, the collar lugs wouldn't meet and keep tight. Forget it. What your chief just said makes sense."

Another odd, tense silence endured for a moment then. It was Jerry Lewis who broke it, and spoke very quietly to Williamson. "You know," he said, "what I think of you and the way you run your ship. But you seem willing to pay a little dough for man power now, and your other boys are either wrecked or no good for the job. I'll take it. I'll unship that bum blade and ship the new one. I'm no diver, though I been down a couple of times with some of the Coast Guard guys out on the West Coast. I won't ask you any pay by the hour. You just pay me five hundred bucks, when and if I do the job. Then you hand me what ship's pay I got on the book, and I'll be shoving off, Mister. How's that?"

Williamson smiled at him: there was arrogance in it, and contempt, and a trace of open, savage rage. "You come high, fella," he said. "But that's a bet, a bargain. If the job's not right, or you don't finish it, you won't get a nickel. And if you still keep on like you are now, I'll ask you to come up the dock a little way with me, and take care of another idea you seem t' have about who's the tougher man. There's the suit. Get into it. Get going. What you waiting for? These lads are witness to the deal."

The current was viciously fast and treacherous down there under the fantail of that ship. The light was opaque and vague already, the chill of the water numbing through the layers of protective clothing and the grease he had put on his body. Jerry Lewis worked barehanded, by the touch of his hands against the bare, slick steel.

How long he was down there on the stage in the swirl and ice-cold pull of the river the first time, he did not know. He got the shattered blade free, though, felt it slip and go surging past him down into the bottom mud. Then, his brain blurred, his veins and heart pounding, he signaled to be brought up, was hauled tumbling into the lifeboat. Williamson unscrewed and lifted the helmet from his head. Williamson sat alone before him and waited for him to speak. "All right,"

he husked finally. "That's done. You can send the new blade down, as soon as I got my wind, and get back."

"Brandy?" Williamson asked, and indicated a bottle beside him.

"No," he said. "I had too much of that stuff before. That's one of the things that's got me now."

"It'll be dark pretty soon," Williamson said tonelessly.

"I know," he said, the words slow, and difficult. "Put the helmet back. I'm set again."

FROM the moment that he resubmerged himself his fight against the river, against the cold and the dark, the elements of time and the great, awkward blade he could barely see, became a form of fantastic torture. He was not capable of it, he knew; the job was too much for him alone. He had fought; he had given all he had, but it was not enough. His rage, his hate of Williamson, had given him excessive strength, but they were gone now, burned out and dull, useless to him. The new blade had been lowered to him, and he had succeeded in seating it in place. But now it must be secured, and that was beyond him. He was licked. . . . Weakly, he jerked on one of the maze of heaving lines the signal to be brought up, slacked lax inside the suit as he was hauled aloft.

He must have fainted for a short time then, because the first things of which he was aware were the dim outlines of the boat, and Williamson's face and voice. "You got tangled in the lines then," Williamson said. "We almost lost you. You got badly fouled. How's it going? Can you finish?"

"No," he said, hating himself and every syllable of the words. "I can't. Not alone. But I'll go back again and try. Give me a swig of that brandy."

In a whispering voice Williamson cursed. "Not alone, you won't," he said. "You're a tougher man, and a better one, than I thought you were, lad. You caught me when I was down, when you got your price, but you're still fighting for it, when you're about licked yourself. So I'm going down with you myself this time, suit or no suit, helmet or no helmet. I can stay a little while; I can help you a bit. Anyhow, I can see you don't get fouled in those lines when you're brought aloft. . . . Go down again, when you're ready. I'll be along, and we'll set that blade. Forget the bet—the deal. We got work to do, damn it, and no breath to waste."

Once more in the black grip of the river, visions confused themselves in his brain with the figure of Williamson. For Williamson worked right beside him on the stage, bare-handed and stripped to the skin. The man had dived down from the boat, hauling himself along the intricacy of lines passed there, found the stage and stood upon it, made himself fast with a rope end and turned to, aiding him. He stayed a minute, two minutes, just how long Jerry Lewis could not tell.

Then, vaguely, he was gone, up to the air and light, only to return, work again at his side. And, between them, working so, against the current, the dark, the cold and the inert mass of steel they moved with their bare hands and the despairing, shrewd strength of their bodies, they sent home and secured the missing blade, knew they had won, that it was done, and started to rise towards the surface in the same instant through the dark, swift waters.

Jerry Lewis was giddy, his strength spent to the final dregs. He did not watch Williamson closely as he himself was hauled up; he could not even clearly see the other man. Then, though, in the second he broke the surface, he knew that something was wrong, that in some way Williamson was trapped below. Because there was no sign of the other on the surface. Unburdened by any weighted diving clothing and equipment, capable of rising immediately, Williamson should be here now. With a brief, sharp

sign of his hand to the men in the boat, Jerry Lewis told them to stop heaving him aloft. He deeply and slowly inhaled the dry, fluttering air pumped into him. He was gambling his own life stupidly if he went down there again, the dull and gradual realization came to him. Yet, if he did not, Williamson would die in just a few seconds more.

Jerry Lewis went down with his hands groping out before him into that evil cavern of the river waters, his underlip caught between his teeth against the gasps of his agonized breathing. He found Williamson; his numbed hands glanced over the other's naked torso and head. His fingers touched and then cleared the lines which had tangled about Williamson's feet and ankles. He took the other man in his arms, and could feel him move very slightly, knew then he had this time at least beaten death. Then, with consciousness ebbing away from him, hardly knowing that he did it, he brought his grip to the line made fast about him, gave the signal to them above to haul aloft.

THE next time Jerry Lewis saw Williamson was in the ship's galley, where they had propped him close to the big range to strip the diving clothing from him, massage his body back to warmth and strength. Williamson wore the pepper-and-salt suit, the gray hat. His face was still very pale, his eyes strangely dark, but he leaned against the galley door judiciously clipping the end from a cheroot. Sudddenly, all the other men were gone from the room, and he and Jerry Lewis were alone there.

"I want to tell you now," Williamson said, "that I know you saved my life down there just now. And, you didn't have to; you might ha' damn' well let me drown, in my own fool way . . . "

For an instant, Williamson paused, to light the cheroot, and roll it over in his bruised fingers. "And I want to tell you now," he said, staring, "that I didn't know the boy, Red, was as lame as that when I chased him over the side in Duluth. If he'd spoken up then, and told me, I'd have kept him aboard; I liked that kid, a lot. I was responsible to his folks for him. . . . But you said, a while back, that you'd like to take a walk down the dock with me. You think you're up to doing that now?"

Jerry Lewis was on his feet, and straight. Across his memory passed the echo of the words young Red had said to him, just before they had gone overside, there in Duluth. Red had wanted to go then; Red's boyish pride and a belief in his own strength had driven him. He had even asked him, Jerry Lewis, not to speak for him to this man. Afterwards, he had forgotten that, but that was the truth. . . .

"If I did go down the dock with you," Jerry Lewis said slowly to Williamson, "it would only be to shake your hand. I guess, though, I can do that right here. I liked that kid, too, and a lot."

"Yeah," Williamson said; his grip was quick, immense. "You want to pull out now, bosun? You want to be paid off?"

Jerry Lewis shook his head. "No," he said. "I've kind of changed my mind. You still want me in this ship?"

"Only for a couple of weeks more, as bosun," Williamson said. "Then we'll be tying up. But next April I'll be looking for a new second mate. This fella I got ain't staying with the ship. You think you might be around in the spring, for that job?"

A silence fell shortly between them before Jerry Lewis answered him. "You'll have to slow her down," he said then. "You'll have to stop driving her so hard, and give the lads who work her for you a chance, more of a chance than Red had. More of a chance than you had, just now."

"You'll sign with me," Williamson asked, "if I do that?"

"Sure," Jerry Lewis said, and grinned. "Sure, I will."

Strong men take one look an' get weak!

BALDY SOURS AND THE HUMAN RACE

By Chas. W. Tyler

WHEN a town like Cowtrack becomes exposed to civilization, strong men want to start runnin'. Cowtrackers never bein' in the habit of runnin' except on hossback, an' away from the sheriff at that, us fellas in Buzzard shoulda got bridlewise when they up an' cottons to them Olympus runnin' races so pronto. 'Specially seein' it was an original-brand idea of Titterin' Tight's.

Now, livin' in an elegant cow meetropylus like Buzzard, us folks in general has always looked down on Cowtrack as a pueblo of low-lifes, of Digger Injuns. The which the fact that only the week before Cowtrackers has phenagled us Buzzard lopers into a game which they calls "polo", and got away with all our cash bets thereafter, shoulda made us plumb cautious. Which it has.

That polo game whereat they bamboozled us ain't no "polo" anyway; it ain't nothin' but a kind of crazy hoss-hockey, with cowfolks on both sides ridin' good cuttin' hosses to death just to whack at a pore innocent little ball with gimp-handled mallets.

It's Cowtrack's idea and Cowtrack's rules, so it was only natcheral that Cowtrack wins.

This hoss-hockey is held out on Hell's Dance Hall, a dry lake. It is ten miles long and five miles wide, this lake is, but I'm estimatin' that it's still too small.

That hoss-hockey game is still a sore spot in the mem'ry of Buzzard, and worth a man's life to mention it. Because them Cowtrackers, once that ball is thrown onto the lake, don't pay no more attention to it than they would to a pimple on a man in Kansas. They just

wave their gimp-handled mallets a few, an' look around for the nearest Buzzard gent to abate.

Even at that we Buzzard lopers does middin' well till Baldy Sours—Baldy bein' me an' Texas Joe's half-wit pardner—final sees the ball in a wheel rut, an', figgerin' it was a fossil egg likely, picks it up. Directly him an' a Cowtrack ruffian by name of Vinegar Vine get in a embrolio, an' Vinegar pats Baldy between the horns with his gimp-handled mallet. The ball trickles across the Buzzard goal line, finishin' the game, an' with it, most of Buzzard's spare cash money.

So all this next week Buzzard slinks in its wickiup an' commences figgerin' revenge.

Titterin' Tight was in old lady Bibb's *tienda* one day, readin' a paper four years old. "Whut is them thar Olumpus fracus?" he asks, bright as four bits, p'intin' at the paper.

"Hell, don't you know nothin' a-tall scurcely, ye ole badger?" says Jake Blouse, shocked at Titterin's iggnerunce. "Them is whar the Greeks an' the Turks fit doddles."

Titterin' peers at the pitchers in the papers, an' wags his foliage—meanin' no dice. Then he ruminates, complete bewildered: "They is some skittish hombres in corset covers an' short drawers a-jumpin' over a gate, looks like to me."

"Who was chasin' 'em—the Injuns?" chirks Whisky Bill, wakin' up out of a jag.

"Whuh-whuh-whar all do this ye-ye-yere take place?" inquire Twitter Burke, who has got a implement in his vocal pianner.

"To Los Angulus," Titterin' says, "in th' Collosolum. Lookit. Here is a pitcher of a jasper throwin' a cannon ball—"

"It's jist some more of them damn newspaper lies!" snorts Zabriskie Sack. "Anybody know yuh don't throw a cannon ball—yuh shoot it out of artillery."

"Le's see," continue Twitter, pushin' his snoot deeper in the paper. "It mentions feet runnin', an' swummin' in a water hole, an' a relay race, an' prod pole jumpin', an' that ain't the half of it."

"Complicated as hell," opines Gummy McCarty.

Just then, Baldy says: "Lissen! I have got a swell ijee."

"If you had an idee," states the old lady Bibb, "it would fracture yore skull."

"What we should ought to did," Baldy says, "is play them bib-overall cowboys over to Cowtrack these here Olympus Games a few—an' win back all the money we lost on that hosshockey business."

THE old lady Bibbs blinks a couple of times; then pushes up her pug an' brackets her elbows on her rump. You could almost hear her brains shiftin' gears.

"It musta been a commotion like that that cracked the Liberty Bell," she says, beamin' at this man, Sours. "An' I thought yore haid was a desert, an' nothin' would grow there."

"We will send a congregation to wait on Cowtrack," declares Jake Blouse, spittin' on his hands in anticipation, "an' we will challenge 'em to beat hell."

An' we did.

The committee taken a pasear over to Cowtrack. There was me an' Baldy an' Texas Joe an' Titterin' Tight, an' about fifteen more. But it wa'n't enough. We ain't been in Cowtrack five minutes until Vinegar Vine an' Baldy Sours smell noses.

"Ain't I of saw yuh some place, hoss thief?" says this man Vine.

Baldy, he taken off his sombrero an' points to the knot on his cupalo. "Look what yuh done t' me, yuh damn maneatin' vultoor!" he yelps.

"Oh, did I done that?" chipper Vinegar, pleased. "I don't remember."

An' Baldy jolts his memory by hittin' him over the head with a picket out of a gate.

Whittle Withers, the marshal, tries to arrest Baldy for incitin' a riot, an' ole man Tight says it's the first time he seen a rabbit wearin' a six-shooter, an' sets out to separate Whittle from the smoke waggin.

An' one word lead to another until final we got in a fight.

But when Cowtrack found out that we just come over to pay a friendly call, an' invite 'em to indulge some in a few Olympus Games, they are abserloot bewitched, an' they says nothin' would of keep 'em away except the state militia.

An' so they let us out of the calaboose, an' we return to Buzzard fair devoured with anticipation, an' bugs.

We go in trainin' to oncet.

We figger there couldn't be anythin' better to put some jaspers in shape than Pain Killer an' hoss liniment, an' the results was remarkable, no less.

Ole man Sack is ag'in foot-runnin' in his underwear, on account of the last time he had any, they pinned it on him, an' I guess his recollection was that it hampered a man's activity. An' Twitter Burke, bein' shy an' retirin' about to the extent a she-antelope would be, he objects to havin' strange females feast their eyes on his fambly skeleton.

Well, we auger back an' forward, an' peroose them pitchers of the gents workin' at this Olympus business, an' it is decided that Buzzard acquire such dohickeys as meet the requirements.

The old lady Bibb says she has got everythin' in that line that us monkeys will need in her store. What that female gomodon unearths, you'd be alarmed.

I might mention that Missus Bibb is what yuh would term a whole pile adequate. Yuh might of heerd of the bird that got the early worm. If that had happened in the Mohave Desert, the old lady Bibb would of got *both* of 'em.

She is a sod widder that arrove at that stage of bein' deserted by one Casket Charley, who wed her in her bloom. A couple years before Charley went up the flume, he taken a pasear to San Berdoo, where he get illuminated. He went to some pains to select a real elegant casket, which he fetches back to Buzzard with 'em, an' put on display for everybody to admire.

When Charley let go his tail-holt on life, the old lady Bibb thought the casket was too purty to plant a wart like the late lamented in, so she kept it for a hope chest.

I mean, this woman has got vision. You'll see.

Wednesday, a committee come over from Cowtrack with a list of combatants. Whittle Withers led 'em, an' there was Dooman Needy an' Rimmy Try, an' some tough-lookin' brand-blotters from ole man Kreeper's Straddle K outfit in Hoss Thief Canyon.

Whittle wants to know what arrangements has been made to provide pallbearers, an' he leers at ole man Tight.

"Podner," Titterin' assures him, "jist yistiddy we git out the hearst an' grease the wheels. We will freight defunct Cowtrackers home half fare—or dig 'em one, gladly."

"Hell, I thought this was goin' to be a feet race," says Dooman Needy.

"Wall, it will help," opines Jake Blouse.

Gummy McCarty was app'inted referee for our side. He has got a wood leg an' can't see good in one eye. Cowtrack says Stinky Flowers will be their empire. Stinky has got a flowin' ox-horn mustache an' a head that runs to a peak like, which if it wa'n't for his ears his shoulders would have to hold his hat up. Along Friday evenin', the old lady Bibb pushes me an' Texas Joe out in the alley to hold palaver. That woman was just as full of notions as a buzz saw is of teeth.

"You two cow jockeys take a lantern," she says, "an' go out behint the livery stable an' get plenty of them tandem worms with the pitchfork feet. When I bet my wampum on a spavined, ringwormed lot of old side-hill gougers, I want to know where at they're goin'."

FOR two-three days, desert rats an' saddle tramps had been arrivin', on account of word had reached 'em that Buzzard an' Cowtrack hold some sort of business at which they smoke the pipe of peace, an' are goin' to bury the hatchet—prob'ly in each other.

The Las Vegas papers says rumor reach 'em from Ivanpah way that there is goin' to be some Olympus Games on a dry lake called Hell's Dance Hall, an' that Cowtrack an' Buzzard will participate. An' it says, judgin' from the recent polo game, the federal marshal ought to be notified.

An' somebody says a couple Los Angulus papers mention it.

Anyhow, Saturday mornin' they started comin'. There was dudes an' dude wranglers from Death Valley, an' sagebushers off the Arrowhead Trail. Folks come from Hollywood, San Bernadino, Victorville, Barstow, Needles, Goffs, Searchlight, an' Vegas. There was even a feller with a movin' pitcher camera from some news outfit. The crowd herds on the dry lake an' awaits developments.

When the Buzzard nimble-legs appear, everybody cheers unanimous except four or five ladies an' the hombre with the movin' pitcher camera, who fall unconscious.

Ole Titterin' Tight has got on a union suit with stripes like a zebra hoss. He is wearin' a belt an' six-shooter an' hobnail boots.

Twitter Burke looked like that pitcher of that pore wind-whipped pine at timber-line. How a couple of bent twigs like that haul his feet around is remarkable, no less. He is wearin' trottin' pants an' a purple banner across his chicken-breast which the old lady Bibb dug out of her hope chest. It says onto it: *Dear Departed.*

Jake Blouse is six-foot three, an' he look like he shrunk hisself into one of them C. Q. D. underbritch sets. He is wearin' boots an' spurs.

Ole Zabriskie Sack has got on a pair of them leather pads to keep his knees from chafin'. His whiskers was blowin' in the wind, an' he looked like Moses.

Texas Joe's legs bow like the middle arch of a bridge, an' when he run, he looked like a sulky boundin' over a piece of rimrock.

Baldy Sours, me an' Texas's simple pardner, has got on a sort of trunkette piece of apparel, the sex of which I blushin'ly hesitate to name. It has got about the same amount of material a balloon would have, an' the legs has some lace business. It was held up by a horse-hair *mecate,* an' then there was a rumpus chokin' off Baldy's stummick that had seven or eight suspenders danglin'. It was pink. Strong men take one look, an' get weak.

Gone-ag'in Goode, who prospects in the Panamints winters, where it gets right cold, he is slinkin' around furtive in a set of red-flannel underdrawers.

"My Gord, I wuz never so mortified in me life," he says.

"Yuh been mortified so long," says the ole lady Bibb, "it's a wonder the buzzards ain't et yuh."

The entire town of Cowtrack accompanies their side, an' they had the Sheepherders' Marine Band from St. David, an' two Injun ringers.

Titterin' Tight protests, but ole man Withers allow nothin' was said about not hirin' extra hands so long as they was amachoors.

A hombre who says he was a movin' pitcher star offers to be time-keeper. But Gummy McCarty declares ag'in it.

"The hombres that ain't up when I count ten," he states, "lose the race."

"Ye don't count in feet racin'!" yells Stinky Flowers, the other empire. "Hit's the jasper thet gits thar fust!"

"Git whar fust?" squalls Gummy, pattin' the ground with his hemlock bough. "Don't try to tell me suthin', ye pod-augered ole squirt!"

"Shet up!" shriek Stinky.

"Shet me up!" scream Gummy.

"I am a reliable person," pant Stinky.

"but if I loose percession of mese'f an' whack yuh one, ye'll jist be a blot on th' lan'scape."

"I am, am I?" hiss Gummy, an' dent Stinky in the shin with his post.

An' this man Flowers takes a wipe at ole man McCarty.

As quick as we get the referees sorted out, the Olympus Games unfold, just like a bird's-eye view of wild hosses.

THE first event was goin' to be a relay race, but they decides on account of the runners could have clubs, it would be better not to eliminate so many so soon.

The Sheepherders' Band played, "Whose Old Cow," an' a Cowtrack sky-pilot prayed for the lost souls in Buzzard.

A hombre blowed a bugle for 'em to fall in for a five-furlong free-for-all. The gents start from commencement, an' run 'round a whisky barrel out on the dry lake, an' return when they are able.

The two Injun ringers from Cowtrack was named respectably Covered Waggin an' San Jacinto. They was dressed in a feather an' a latigo strap.

The ole lady Bibb says if them redskins go past that barrel of fire water, it will be amazin'.

Titterin' pats his six-shooter. "The fust Cowtrack brand-burner thet pass me," he says, "I will swaller-fork his years."

"Not one onscrooperlous activity," warns ole man Kreeper, shakin' his finger in Titterin' face.

Just then Gummy McCarty hollers: "Turn 'em loose!" an' he shoots off a gun.

Ole man Tight starts runnin' in the wrong direction. Twitter Burke comes by from away back yonder, where he went to get a good start, an' he sounds like an accordian.

An' then there was Dooman Needy. Every time he jackknifes, he makes noises like a loose connectin' rod. Zabriskie Sack's legs interfere so bad, somebody opines it'd be a mercy to shoot the ole coot before he caulks hisse'f.

Baldy Sours an' Vinegar Vine is grasshopperin' side by side, an' every jump, they let go a back-hand that whistles the same as a lark. Whittle Withers an' Jake Blouse just keep in talkin' distance, an' if Jake could of overtook Whittle, he would have killed 'im. Covered Waggin an' San Jacinto are 'way out in front, an' Cowtrack is countin' money.

Rimmy Try, he is pushin' on the ground with his treadles until you had to look twice to see if it was a man or a bicycle, an' trackin' him down diligent is Texas Joe, reachin' out every jump, tryin' to ketch Rimmy by the nape of the pants.

Two pick-up riders chase Titterin' on hoss back, an' haze him in the right direction. Just as quick as he found out where Buzzard was, he banks an' picks up the scent of Covered Waggin an' San Jacinto, who are slowin' up for the whisky barrel.

"Bend down, red man!" he whoop. 'Pale-face heap bad medicine." An' he commence shootin' at the whisky barrel, to the accompaniment of the agonized screams of the ole lady Bibb.

The Injuns whirl around, an' it looks like they return to the Little Big Horn for reinforcements. Dooman Needy an' Twitter Burke collide, on account of nobody can see any more for dust, an' they reel up an' whoop, an' are off ag'in —in opposite directions.

An eighth of a mile from the finish line, Baldy an' Vinegar Vine get into some sort of an acute situation, an' are attemptin' to husk each other.

An' then, all of a sudden, here come Whittle Withers.

When Gummy McCarty seen that Whittle is goin' to win the race for Cowtrack, he run out an' start bellerin', "Foul!" so loud he sounded like a Union Pacific passenger engine whistlin' for Salt Lake City.

"Whut's foul about it?" screech Stinky

Flowers, pushin' Gummy in the whiskers.

"I seen th' hull thing!" yipper ole man McCarty. 'He cut inside the kag!"

"Ha'f a man an' ha'f a tree!" blat Stinky, disgusted. An' he offer to take Gummy's stump an' comb his hair with it.

Well, we pry Baldy an' this Vine bumble bee separate, an' hold Texas Joe an' Rimmy Try, an' plead with Jake Blouse not to harm Whittle—an' call it a dead heat, on account of we can yell louder than Cowtrack, an' have got them outnumbered anyhow.

By now everybody is complete surrounded. Folks says these Olympus games is better than a good revolution. You talk about eager—practical all of the onlookers has got to hoolihan somebody to keep 'em from attackin' each other.

Whittle Withers an' ole man Kreepers is wavin' money an' offerin' to bet any amount up to seven dollars an' a second mortgage that Cowtrack can give Buzzard head start an' knock back their ears before they get to their burrow.

The folks want the other races shorter, because they says in the long ones everybody is too winded to fight worth shucks.

IN THE next event, it was where yuh start from the beginnin' an' lope a couple hundred yards to the finish. Twitter Burke gets up on a barrel, an' commands attention. He looks like somebody picked a buzzard. He opens his mouth like it was the door to a cavern, but nothin' comes out but a drizzle. You could tell that he was buildin' some language, on account of his goose neck is throbbin' like a pulse.

"Lul-lul-luladies an' gents," he pants. "Th' n-n-next event wuh-wuh-wuh-will be two-huh, two-huh, two-huh—"

An' somebody hollers: "With seven thousand people here, they would pick you to throw talk!"

An' Twitter wants to fight 'im.

An' somebody shouts "Hooraw!" which terminates the oratory.

The ole lady Bibb has got a roll that would choke a pythorn, an' she offer to bet that in the next race Cowtrack is stray cattle between chute an' pistol shot.

"Good cripe!" Titterin' pleads with the ole lady Bibb. "Don't do that. Maybe we got to gentle these yere fuzz-tails some more yet."

"This is the sack race," whispers Missus Bibb, all a-twitter.

"Whut sack race?" snarl Titterin'.

"Shet up!" snap the ole lady Bibb. "It's in the bag."

The movin' pitcher feller is sore, because in that other race, he says, all he got was somethin' that would look like an underwear plant exploded.

"For God's sake!" he says. "Just show me where you birds are going to run this time."

An' another feller who was with him says: "Come now, gentlemen, let's do this thing right. There's going to be a lot of money on this race, and we want everything on the up-and-up."

"Shorely," says the ole lady Bibb, tryin' to look coy. "You show them missin' links."

An' this hombre bustles around as important as buttons on your pants. He tells everybody what should ought to be did, an' you could see he figgered to grab off some of the Buzzard money by bettin' on them two Injuns.

"Regardless of how many entrants there are on either side," he tells us, "the first two across the finish line win. If one of them is a Cowtrack man and the other a Buzzard man, there will be a special sprint match between these two. Is that clear?"

"Cootie," smirks the ole lady Bibb, "I think you're wunnerful. How much was yuh goin' to wager, did I hear yuh say?" An' she crooks an eye at 'im, like pourin' sugar for ants.

An' the gent peels off some ready

money, winkin' at a couple of other dudes, the same as to express a very low opinion of a few folks.

They wouldn't let Titterin' freight his six-shooter in this next race, on account of they says he might shoot somebody by mistake; an' he says he might shoot somebody, but it wouldn't be no mistake. So they give the six-gun to the ole lady Bibb to holt, an' that was just like givin' ammunition to a firin' squad.

Gummy McCarthy an' Stinky Flowers, they are whoopin' an' a-hollerin' an' roundin' up the hombres who are a-goin' to partake of this here Olympus contest. A couple of them dudes push around important, lendin' asistance an' offerin' sage advice.

Me an' Texas Joe haze ole man Goode out from behint a buckboard, where he has tooken refuge from some toorusts with cameras.

By now them ranahans are lined up, an' it looks like meat bones should ought to be a dime a dozen. The two dudes an' some more have stretched a fifty-foot lass-rope, so's nobody can go bulgin' off prematoor, an' now then it heaves out in the middle, on account of everybody is so ardent.

Gummy an' Stinky go out to the finish line so's they can see who comes in first, if any. An' the movin' pitcher feller has moved his crank-box an' dofunnies about where he estimates this melee will terminate.

"Now's your chance!" says the ole lady Bibb, runnin' up to me an' Texas Joe, an' handin' us the secret works.

If a man can do tolerable fancy with just two legs, she thinks, he would do better if he had some more legs. An' there ain't anythin' got any more legs than a centipede. So it looks plausible.

There was about eight centipedes in the sack Texas Joe had, an' only about five in mine, but my centipedes was bigger. We would of got more, but we couldn't find any.

Just then ole man McCarty shoots the gun.

Texas Joe give this man, Baldy Sours, a push—an' empties the centipedes down into them abundant britches with the gatherin' strings around the legs. I shove on ole man Goode, an' slip mine inside of them red drawers.

I REGRET that I don't kiss ole man Goode an' say, "Adios!" on account of it don't look like we was goin' to see him any more. He bounds up in the air, an' grabs his bottom in two hands—an' runs over San Jacinto, the Injun, like he was a bridge.

"Be the cheeperin' hell gallop!" he shrieks. "Whut has hatch?"

Sampson Sebastion Sours, that bein' his full brand, he starts away just as normal as runnin' water. It don't appear that them bugs with the hot feet start climbin' until Baldy has made ten or twelve revolutions.

An' then this hoot-nanny's mouth flops open, the same as a door in a wind storm, an' he trumpet.

He pat the earth with his leather an' soar. He make explorin' motions but don't get no satisfaction, you would judge. He practical onhinge his jaws, an' they could heard him in Chug Water, Wyomin', just like a chain broadcast.

Them other Buzzard an' Cowtrack runners sort of shy off, like they figger ole man Sours an' Gone-ag'in have got hystericks, or somethin'.

Baldy whoop an' bounce, an' if he only had one tail-feather, he could of made a mallet duck ashamed of itse'f. The second jump, he practical perch on Vinegar Vine's prow, like a albercross in the riggin' of a ship.

"Git away from me!" scream Vinegar, wavin' his arms an' tryin' to dodge. "Whut in hell d'ye think ye are—a homin' pigeon?"

The next convulsion, Baldy passes Covered Waggin like he was standin' in front of a cigar store.

Twitter Burke, it looks, finds the goin' slightly popperlated, an' he veers away

more toward the mountains. The ole lady Bibb sets out to turn 'im by shootin' at his feet. A bullet cuffs the dry lake, an' rickets, an' busts Gummy McCarty's wood leg the same as if it had been struck by lightnin'.

Ole man McCarty, he ain't sure if somebody is tryin' to bushwhack 'im, or if he has been attacked by terminites, but he suspects Stinky Flowers. Gummy starts boundin' around on his one leg, wavin' his six-cannon an' lookin' to see who he will kill.

Twitter Burke picks up speed, the same as a runaway chuck waggin comin' down Bill Williams Mountain, an' his head is screwin' around like he has got a ball-socket neck, lookin' to see who is tryin' to lay him low.

He starts runnin' zigzag, an' collides with Dooman Needy.

"Why don't ye go whar ye're lookin', ye old bundle of whiskers?" squall Doman, tryin' to pole Twitter to one side.

An' Twitter call this man Needy a maverick—only by another name.

Gentlemen, hark!

Everybody is a-whoopin' an' a-hollerin' an' a-faintin'. There is twisters goin' in every direction, an' every one of 'em has got a couple of ramrod legs, an' a cheeperin' into the middle of it.

The shorthorn with the movin' pitcher camera is out to one end of the suspected finish line, an' he would of done better in front of a stampede.

Jake Blouse has tangled one foot up in that lass-rope they was usin' for a picket line, an' it is twitchin' along on the ground amongst all of this commotion until somebody tromp on it. Jake, he whack the ground so hard he bounce like an empty barrel.

He deem it the work of Rimmy Try, who is flutterin' by at the moment, cluckin' like rooster. Rimmy could tell that somethin' was out of kilter, I guess, on account of he didn't know that he come from that kind of people, an' the last seen of him, he was two miles away, headin' for Stovepipe Wells.

Whiffletree Wunce, late of Cowtrack, hear a gun go off now an' then, mingled with the clapper of No. 10's an' female chirrupin'. He look over his shoulder an' seen the ole lady Bibb bearin' down. He prob'ly figgered she is a loonatick, like he allus suspected, an' two days later cowboys round him up in the Amargosa Desert like lost cattle, an' he has got lumpy jaw from hittin' his chin with his knees.

Stinky Flowers has lift up his snoot an' is bayin' like a beagle dog on the full of the moon. He claim foul, interference, clippin', illegal use of the hands, attack with a loaded gun an' assault.

The movin' pitcher jasper is a-crankin' his machinery an' peerin' around the corner, all atwitter, when Whittle Withers an' some more Olympus wahoos run over him like a truck would a cattle guard. He final heave up, an' unwrop a few tripods from around his breather pipe. "Goddlemighty!" he screech. "What in hell kind of a foot race is this?"

Baldy Sours an' ole man Goode, they not only cross the finish line, but they practical demolish Stinky Flowers, the same as if he was on a trestle when two run-away bulgines went by.

Baldy an' Gone-ag'in is now disappearin' over a rise several miles away. Ole man Goode has molt, an' he is fannin' his brisket with them red drawers, seekin' to disperse these here electric worms with the bowie knife feet.

Me an' Texas Joe's simple pardner, Sampson Sours, has complete shucked his onderwear business, an' is dustin' hishe'f with two handfuls of sage bushes every jump.

An' so Buzzard wins the Olympus Games.

A sheepherder on the west side of the Charleston Mountains reports he seen a commotion goin' acrost Pahrump Valley that looked like two male corpses runnin' neck an' neck, but he don't pay much attention, because a sheepherder gets so he sees a lot of funny things.

TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS

• TONNAGE •

Contrary to general belief, the word tonnage has nothing to do with the weight (displacement) of a merchant vessel. In early days, the size of a trading-ship was estimated by the number of TUNS (barrels) of wine she could carry in her hold, and it is from this we get the word TONNAGE or TUNNAGE.

• By the GREAT HORN SPOON •

An oath so obsolete that no man living has ever heard it used in general conversation. The GREAT HORN SPOON was the ancient sailorman's homey nickname for the BIG DIPPER, and had reference to the huge serving-spoons, made of horn, used in serving the meals.

• TATTOO

Tattooing was first used by sailors as a means of identification in the days when family names meant little and few sailors or their lights of love could read.

• TYPHOON •

To Chinese sailormen we are indebted for this addition to our nautical vocabulary. The word means "The Mother of Winds."

The bayonet rose in his hand.

GOLD GALONS

by Frederick C. Painton

IN THE late afternoon of the third day of pursuit Sergeant Bart Connery said bitterly, "It would be just my luck if that lousy Berber runs clear to Timbuktu."

Senior Corporal Pete Lacey turned his head and the tense expression of a tired soldier marching against exhaustion softened. He ran a thumb under his pack straps to ease his aching shoulders.

"Cut out the beefing," he growled; "you're fretting yourself into a lather and it don't do any good."

Corporal Lacey could talk like that to Sergeant Connery: they had been pals three years before the Foreign Legion took them off the beach at Marseilles; and outside military formations they were together as much as regulations would permit.

"Anyway, you've got four weeks yet before your birthday," he said.

"Four weeks isn't much," growled Connery. "If we were to catch Abd el Kader tomorrow, I'd have hardly time to get back to Marrakech and get an okay on my papers before May sixteenth."

He raised a sun-blackened hand to his kepi and peered across the blazing *bled*. There were dust clouds where the burnished blue of the sky came down to the brown desert; but he knew these were ranging Spahis making sure that Abd el Kader—always the fox—did not double back toward the Atlas. Swinging his

regard ahead of the lean brown column of Legionnaires, he could see the *goum* scouts silhouetted against the sky. The Tirailleurs on the right were beyond high rock outcroppings, but handy, as Connery knew, if Abd el Kader's two thousand dissidents could be cornered and forced to fight.

"The rat will never stop and fight," Connery said; "he ducked us at Tafalilet, and got away from the Draa."

He swore heartily. A campaign started in December and supposed to be successfully concluded by March at the latest, was dragging along toward May. And Connery, instead of being in Marrakech getting his papers and recommendations for the officers' training school at St. Cyr, was temporarily in command of a Hotchkiss machine gun platoon, chasing a will o' the wisp.

Connery had been trying for a year to get ordered to St. Cyr. But it takes time and influence for an enlisted man to obtain one of those chosen berths. And just as he thought he had it wangled, he was ordered into the *bled* on this campaign. He hadn't minded this at first—indeed, had welcomed action. Only he had not expected the campaign to drag on past his birthday.

That was fatal to all his plans.

The French military regulations made and provided declare specifically that all candidates for St. Cyr from the enlisted personnel must be under twenty-four years of age. On May sixteenth Connery would be twenty-four.

"And after that," he said morosely, "even if I were to capture Abd el Kader personally, I'd never get above *adjutant*."

"What happened to your application for transfer to Marrakech to take the examinations?" Pete asked.

"It never got beyond Captain de la Roche. He called me in and pinned me with that one eye of his and said, 'Sergeant, no man not a casualty or dead shall leave this column until we've crushed Abd el Kader. I'm ashamed of you for asking.'"

"Tough old buzzard," sympathized Pete.

"Oh, he's right," said Connery. "Only I'd like to be an officer. I'd like to get something out of this five-year hitch besides a Colonial medal and the lifetime privilege of riding free third class on all French railroads."

"Right now I'd swap mine for two pounds of inch-thick juicy steak," said Pete.

A SLOPE to the ground that took breath for marching silenced them. Until sunset Connery anxiously watched the horizon and listened for gunfire. But he heard and saw nothing. He felt pretty low at eight o'clock when the column fell out to bivouac. He was seeing to his men when the sudden order traveled down the brown snake of soldiers.

"Do not remove *sacs!* Prepare to march at once!"

A rumor traveled almost as fast as the order.

"Abd el Kader is trapped. Old Colonel Merceau threw the other two companies around him. He's got to stand and fight." Connery heard and his eyes blazed and he suddenly laughed.

"Hear that, Pete?" he cried. "The old fox is going to fight."

"And he'll fight, that baby," said Pete. "He's a tough—"

Connery heard his name called and raced up the column to Captain de la Roche.

"Your guns are temporarily attached to the second and fourth sections to plug up a possible retreat to the east," said de la Roche. "Report immediately to Lieutenant Latour—you march without delay."

Connery gave a start and stared at the captain. "Lieutenant Latour!" he exclaimed.

"Of course, idiot! Your machine guns will protect him in holding the wadi." As Connery stood, "Be off with you now."

Connery turned under de la Roche's impatient stare and stumbled back to his platoon.

"Lieutenant Latour," he groaned. "My God, can you tie that?"

Pete, helping him make ready for the forced hike, sensed his perturbation.

"What's eating you?" he demanded.

"Lieutenant Latour," Connery said dully; "we're detached to his command."

"Latour. You mean the guy you socked in Marrakech?"

"The same cafard-eaten maniac," nodded Connery bitterly.

This, it seemed to him, was the last blow. Of the twenty thousand odd men in the Legion, Latour was, to his knowledge, his only enemy. To have an officer hate you is bad enough at any time; to have an eccentric man with a brain distorted by desert hardships commanding you is demanding trouble.

"Maybe," said Pete, "the guy's forgotten."

"Nobody forgets a punch like that," said Connery. Then, explosively: *"Attention! Tournez-gauche! En avant!"* He moved his platoon to find Lieutenant Latour.

The punch had been a honey!

It had to do with a blond bargirl in the Hotel Continental off the Place Djma el Fna in Marrakech. Once pretty, she was still attractive, though the self-imposed task of drinking herself to death was ruining what youth had given her. She took a fancy to Connery. He gave her a play; after all, pretty white girls are hard to come by in Morocco. She had not told him, when he kept the first date, that for a month or more Lieutenant Etienne Latour had been mad about her. She simply said she wanted to go to the *cinema parlant* in the Palmerie with Connery and he took her there.

Had he known about Latour he would have stayed miles away from her. But the first he knew of the dark, thin young officer was when he and Germaine were about to enter a *fiacre* to return to the Continenal and Latour stepped out from behind some palms. Without a word he began viciously to slash the girl across the face and shoulders with a riding crop.

Connery couldn't take that. He swung a right hook that had one hundred and eighty pounds of hell-fire behind it. Latour hit hard and cold. Connery heard nothing more of it; Latour didn't dare report it. And when the lieutenant went to the *bled* Connery forgot it.

HE COULD only hope Latour had forgotten. He recognized Latour in the darkness, reported and waited anxiously.

He could not see Latour's face in the dusk, but the man made no sign of recognition. His voice was harsh, but the words were of impersonal command.

"It's a forced march of six kilometers, Sergeant. Your *péleton* will march in the center."

Connery disposed of his men. At the crisp words, *"en avant,"* he swung off with a sense of relief.

"You see," said Pete, "the guy's forgotten. Your luck is in."

"Let's wait and see," said Connery grimly.

The march lasted until one o'clock. An old yellow moon had risen and the desert was palely alight. On the left of the halt, Connery saw a sharp, jagged rock outcropping sixty or seventy feet high. Latour came to stand beside him.

"You will occupy that height at once, Sergeant. The *wadi* lies just ahead, three hundred meters. I will give you the coordinates later. Colonel Merceau's main column will attack from the west. Major Fournier's will strike on the center to crush the dissidents between them. Such as attempt to escape this way we shall stop."

"Entendu, Lieutenant," said Connery.

To himself he thought, "So far so good."

By two o'clock he had embrasures arranged, the Hotchkisses with extra barrels broken out, set up, and ammunition boxes ready. At four o'clock, an hour and a half before dawn, Lieutenant Latour, accompanied by two *voltigeurs*, climbed into the stone embrasure. He was facing into the moon glow now and Connery could see his features distinctly.

The man had a nut-cracker face, his long hooked nose reaching down over a thin, cruel mouth as if to touch a protruding jaw. The eyes were glittering, unwinking. The face was expressionless.

Connery leaped up and came to attention. Latour let him stand so. He spoke, harshly precise. "My men are in position, Sergeant. Set your watch at four fifty-one." Connery did so. "You will open fire at five-twenty in short bursts until your targets increase and then you will keep maximum fire so long as the dissidents attempt to retreat by the wadi."

He took out his field message book but did not open it. He stood tapping the palm of his left hand with the book's edge.

"The coordinates are three-eight—zero-zero-nine, and one-three-zero—zero-six. You have your map?"

"Yes, Lieutenant.

"Fix your targets."

Connery took out his field glass case a large-scale map of the region. He measured off the squares and found the coordinate meeting place and looped it lightly with his pencil.

"Very good," said Latour. He wheeled to go. "You perceive, Sergeant, that your fire must be sustained and accurate. If Abd el Kader can sneak out of the trap, then our campaign has gone for naught."

Connery nodded, wondering why Latour should throw in this gratuitous information. Without a backward glance Latour went over the embrasure. Connery took a deep breath of relief.

"He probably couldn't do anything anyway," he said, "but I'm glad he's gone."

WHEN the eastern sky began to lighten he glassed the zone of fire, checking off possible lanes of retreat and other targets. He set the ranges on the three guns himself. Then he stood, thick legs wide apart, staring at the illuminated dial of his watch, as the tiny second hand decreed the passage of time. There was silence across the *bled*. The sky became brilliant with the dawn.

Suddenly the rolling thunder of volley firing came like smashing waves from the east. The meatier bite of Lebels, the vicious whining crack of one-pounders, the whacking explosions of *dak-ohs*, the muzzle-loading rifles of the Chlueh.

"Fifteen shot burst—fire!" snapped Connery.

The lens of his binoculars picked up the dust clouds. "Down two — fifteen more."

Thrice more he corrected slightly until the dust clouds rose out of the wadi that was the target. Still watching through the glasses, he had an aluminum tray fired every ten seconds. From the direction of the oasis where Abd el Kader was making his stand, the drumfire was heavy, the echoes reverberating until individual explosions could no longer be detected.

Suddenly from the oasis white-robed figures began to run toward the wadi, tiny white dots no bigger than a pinhead at this distance. Connery did not shift his sights. The French learned one thing about machine guns from the Germans in the World War. That was to establish interdiction fire by covering zones where a man could not stand up and live. The Chlueh were running toward that zone of fire now. The guns were set to fire knee-high. The moment the Chlueh entered the field of fire they must die or run back. With three guns

playing two hundred slugs a minute they could never get through.

"Maximum fire!" barked Connery.

The loaders, piles of cartridge pans beside them, began to feed one after the other. The assistant gunners stood alert over the spare barrels in case those now in use should buckle under the heavy fire. The heat ripples over the guns grew thicker. The barrels grew faintly red. The gunners' faces blackened.

The ripping snarl of the explosions made a steady staccato sound as if three pneumatic drillers were trying to get done before noon. The dust clouds rose thickly. Connery grinned happily. Not a Chlueh would live through that; the defeat of Abd el Kader would be complete.

Suddenly he saw more men! Men this side of the Chlueh! Men who were brown dots. Running this way. Running out of the depression where his guns played. Connery cursed and clapped his binoculars to his eyes. The brown dots were running—back! And the Chlueh were coming in increasing numbers.

Connery lunged toward the gunners.

"Cease firing!" he yelled.

With his fists he knocked the gunners from their prone positions.

Pete Lacey, face begrimed, cried, "Hey, what are you going?"

"Stop!" Connery was livid. "Those are Legionnaires breaking out of there. *We've been firing into our own men!*"

The roaring racket had ceased. Smoke-blackened gunners looked at Connery in amazement. So did Lacey. But Connery was studying the fleeing Legionnaires, watching the flood of Chlueh race out of the green of the oasis toward the grayish brown of the wadi. Something had to be done or the Chlueh would overwhelm the survivors.

"Raise the sights," Connery ordered. He sprang to the number one gun and himself turned the knurled knob. There was a half-tray of unexpended slugs. He ran it through and picked up the dust spurts with his naked eye.

"Right two," he jerked. "Damn it, shove a pan in there."

Gunners recover quickly from such surprise. Within less than a half-minute after Connery's first startled shout, the three guns played again, this time squarely into the stream of Chlueh. White bits of rag began to lie motionless on the *bled.*

For the next twenty minutes Connery had no time for anything but killing. The guns rattled without pause. The barrels grew cherry red, one buckled under the heat, and a new barrel began to smash again in twelve seconds. But as fast as Connery's guns killed, they could not kill enough. The Chlueh, nearly a thousand of them as nearly as he could estimate, made for the wadi. And many of them reached it.

Connery knew that something else besides his blunder had happened, else so many dissidents would not have escaped from the oasis. But he had no time to figure what. At last the Chlueh disappeared in the folds of the ground and he reluctantly ordered cease firing. The fleeing Legionnaires had come under the brow of the hill and he could not see them.

BUT ten minutes later Lieutenant Latour, followed by scrambling, panting, cursing Legionnaires, boiled into the embrasures, bullets clicking off stones as a hot Chlueh fire chased them. Latour said nothing then. His voice, calm, impersonal, arranged the dispositions of his men and within a moment or so a hot rifle fire stopped what had apparently been a hot rush from the rear. He ordered Connery to transfer one gun to stop another one.

Then only did he summon Connery to stand before him. His eye were hard, his mouth so grim his nose nearly met his chin.

"You swine," he snarled, "you species of *merde*—you have killed twelve of my men and wounded twenty. Forced us out of the position we had to hold at all costs. You—"

It was as if his long pent-up hatred was triggered loose by this blunder. His riding crop rose, flashed in the new sun. The blow left a livid welt across Connery's face. Connery took a step forward, fist so clinched the nails dug into his palms. But he did not strike. He stood thus, tense, staring into Latour's blazing eyes for as long as a man would take to count ten.

"If there was a blunder," he forced himself to say, "it was not mine. You gave me the coordinates and I marked them on the map. And I was firing on the target."

"You lie. You were a hundred meters short of the target."

Latour summoned one of his *voltigeurs*. "Listen to this—for evidence." Then to Connery, "What were the coordinates I gave you?"

Connery relaxed, drew out his map. "Three-eight-zero-zero-nine," he snapped, "and one-three-zero-zero-six."

Latour turned to the narrow-faced *voltigeur*. "You hear? Write it down." He faced Connery again. "You blundering fool! The coordinates were three-nine-zero-zero-eight, and three-one-zero-zero-six. Your stupidity has doubtless permitted Abd el Kader to escape. The campaign has failed—because of you."

Connery's brain whirled. Was he hearing aright? Had he, indeed, made the mistake that all machine gun and artillery officers fear—mixing coordinates, yet apparently hearing intently? He looked down at the map. There was the pencil circle, a hundred meters or more short of the actual targets made by the new coordinates. He tried to remember distinctly; but with malign confusion his brain began to shift the decimals this way and that until he was utterly confused. A furious anger gripped him.

"I marked them down as you spoke them," he growled.

Latour's eyes gleamed.

"Let a *conseil de guerre* decide that. You are relieved of command. You are under open arrest. But since the Chlueh have surrounded this position you will get a rifle from a casualty and fight. If you live—" Latour's eyes now blazed—"I'll personally jerk those gold galons off your arm."

Connery was stunned beyond reply. He watched as Latour took the heliograph from the case and began sending a message to the main troops. Connery knew why Latour did this; if Latour became a casualty his evidence would be in. Nothing could save Connery from trial. He would be broken, and possibly sent to the Battalion Disciplinaire at Colomb-Becher.

Court martials are tough on enlisted men, when an officer is the accuser!

The signal man received bad news, too. Abd el Kader, instead of being in the oasis with two thousand rifles, had four thousand, which meant — since there are two Chlueh for each rifle—a total of eight thousand men. A stubborn resistance had developed, and for the time being Connery's position was surrounded by dissidents and no force could be detached for relief. Latour was told he would have to hold on until the main battle was won or lost.

An hour before Connery would have groaned at this news, but now he did not care. Sergeants broken by court martial are not sent to St. Cyr.

Under Latour's lashing tongue he got a rifle and cartridge pouches from a dead private and for endless hours sniped and shot until his sweat boiled on the Lebel barrel. All day the situation remained unchanged. After two abortive attempts to rush the hill and being mowed down by a hot fire, the Chlueh waited for darkness.

SHORTLY after the sun had gone down and night came with the suddenness of jerking a curtain before a lighted window, Pete stole across the position and lay prone beside Connery.

"He remembered you, Bart," he whispered savagely.

Connery ignored the accusation.

"Do you remember those coordinates?" he asked.

"Hell, no. I was always lousy at arithmetic. But I can remember them at the trial, believe me."

Connery shook his head. That wouldn't help much.

"It was Latour's mistake," he muttered.

"Get wise, guy—he framed you."

Connery shook his head. Mad and eccentric Latour might be, but that he would murder his own men, wreck three months of tough campaigning for revenge, he could not believe. Then he remembered something.

"He'd have the coordinates entered in his field message book," he said. "He never looked at it when he gave them to me. If I had that book now I could—"

"Sure," whispered Pete, "and the next Chlueh rush you can drill him and get it."

Connery again shook his head. To kill in the heat of battle was one thing; to murder a man in cold blood was another.

"No," he said; "I'll get that book—"

"Corporal Lacey," came Latour's harsh voice. The officer had stolen close unawares.

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"You have neglected your post of duty."

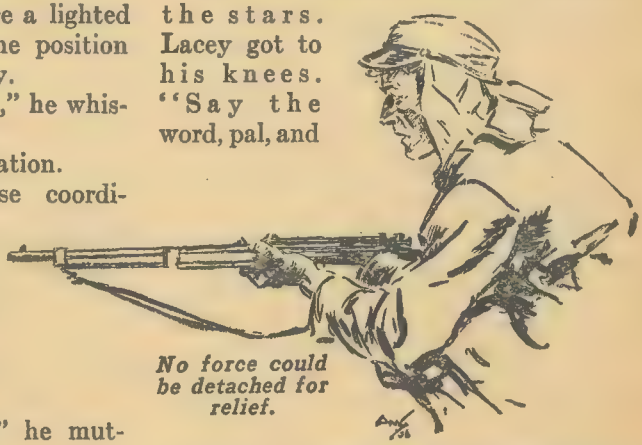
"But I—"

"Make no excuses. The Chlueh have been quiet for an hour. It may be they have drawn off to the east. I intend to find out. Take Connery's pistol, leave off your equipment and prepare to accompany me on a reconnaissance."

"*Entendu,* Lieutenant."

"At once."

The man's shadow ceased to blot out the stars. Lacey got to his knees. "Say the word, pal, and nothing will come back but me and the field order book."



No force could be detached for relief.

Connery grinned. "Leave it to me, will you?"

He lay watchful, listening to the slight click of stone as Latour and Lacey cautiously descended the hill. Presently that died away and the only sound was the moan of a Chlueh below, shot through the belly.

Connery made his plan. When Latour came in Connery would be ready, jump the man as if believing he was a Berber, and in the struggle steal the field dispatch book. If Latour had made the mistake the book would prove it.

Thirty minutes went by with no sound save the sporadic rifle fire from the oasis. Then suddenly, from below, there was the rapid smash of pistol shots, a terrible scream. After an interim another pistol shot roared. Then silence.

Connery had started up, straining into the darkness. But nothing could be seen under the star glitter. What had happened down there?

Connery waited a half-hour. Then forty-five minutes. His teeth clicked on a curse.

Silently he removed the bayonet from the Lebel muzzle. A moment later he

whispered to the sentry, "Don't fire. Something's happened to Latour and Lacey and I'm going down."

He slid over the stone barrier and so down the steep escarpment. In the star-shine he could see possibly ten yards, but by keeping his head low as he squirmed on hands and knees, he could see any standing man silhouetted at fifty yards. He reached the bottom where the old creek bed cut across the *bled,* meeting nothing but dead Chlueh. He put the bayonet steel between his teeth to leave his hands free to move bits of rock from his patch. He moved more cautiously now.

At the end of a half-hour he had reached a point close, he believed, to where the scream had been uttered. Here he suddenly froze, not daring even to take a breath. From behind a rock a white-robed figure had risen noiselessly and now stood fully etched against the purple night sky. Connery heard the clink of money, the rattle of cartridges as the Chlueh pouched the loot. It was so silent now he could hear the steady breathing of the man.

Connery waited motionless. Finally the Chlueh raised a hand. Star-shine glittered along the length of a curved steel blade. Connery knew the dissident was preparing to follow the usual custom of mutilating the dead.

The Chlueh's back was to Connery. Connery came to his feet. He could almost touch the Berber's *djellab.* The bayonet rose in his hand.

A French bayonet is a triangular piece of steel like a rapier, you can either lunge with it or slit the throat. Connery took a step. The stabbing bayonet made a smear of glitter. The Chlueh heard him, wheeled in a flash, his own knife flashing out and up in a ripping cut.

The needle point of the bayonet slid into the throat flesh as a knife goes through soft butter. A gout of blood spurted at least a foot and struck Connery hotly, saltily. The Chlueh's blow continued and though Connery twisted, the sword caught his tunic sleeve at the wrist and laid his arm open to the elbow.

He was thrown off his feet and fell over the twitching body of the dead Berber.

AFTER the first hot slicing pain the arm went numb. He lay holding his breath, listening to see if the sounds of the struggle had been heard. There was no sound save the sporadic firing from the direction of the oasis. At the end of five minutes he moved forward. Then he saw star-glitter on boots. An officer. He felt along the body. The figure moved feebly, moaned, "*Je suis blessé.*"

Silence. Then: "Who is it?"

"Me, Connery."

"Ah, Sergeant. Thank God, you have come. I am hit—in the stomach." The man was suffering and Connery's grim mouth softened.

"Where's Lacey?" he asked gently.

"He was knifed shortly after—coming to help me. He is dead."

Pete dead! Connery's lips tightened. It just couldn't be. Pete was his pal.

Latour's hand feebly clawed at him.

"Take me in, Sergeant," he husked. "They may come back. There were ten of them, and—"

"Hush!" said Connery. All the dislike he had had for Latour faded in face of the man's agony. You can't hate a wounded, lonely man.

He arranged Latour comfortably and moved on, feeling around until at last he saw the pallid, upturned face of Pete Lacey some ten yards distant. Connery's hand moved along Pete's chest and so to his face. The flesh was warm! Putting his ear to the lips he could hear the erratic respiration.

"He's alive," he muttered. A warm surge of joy swept him.

His tenderly groping hand encoun-

tered the clotting blood on the right chest. A stab wound that, from the sound of the breathing, had penetrated the lung. Connery felt sick.

A lung wound! Cut off from the main column, remote from physician's aid, such a wound would be fatal. Poor guy! But wait! There was a chance for Pete; the firing was getting closer. Sometime after daybreak the main column would come up, and Captain Medicin Perout would do wonders—he always did.

The problem then became one of getting Pete up the hillside with only one arm. To drag him would make too much noise. Connery sat down and got off his tunic and ripped his shirt. He bound a tight piece of the shirt around his arm. Some of the rest he used to bandage Pete.

"Connery. Sergeant Connery."

Connery started erect. My God! There was Latour wounded, too.

Connery crept to the lieutenant.

"Sergeant," Latour said hoarsely, "I do not wish to die. Dr. Perout—he can save me. Take me in. Do not leave me here alone."

"Sure," said Connery. He made the rest of his shirt into a bandage and tied it over Latour's belly wound with a wrap puttee. He brought Pete to lay them side by side. During all this he neither saw nor heard a Chlueh. But the task of carrying two men—wounded as he was—would make noise. He stared up at the height. Then he got his burdens shouldered and started upward.

He staggered, straining, feeling the blood of his wound break through the bandage. His strength seemed to dissolve. His feet clattered on rocks; he tripped over a small one and fell with a crash. He tried again to shoulder his burdens and could not. The truth dawned on him then. He could not take in both men.

His decision must be made: he had to abandon one or the other, knowing he could not get back in time to save the one he left. A half-stifled groan burst from him.

Latour seemed to sense his dilemma.

"Don't leave me," Latour begged. "It was my mistake on the coordinates. I blamed you to save myself. But I will tell the truth. I swear it. Only don't leave me."

Connery did not reply. It did not help him to know that by taking Latour in he would clear himself of court martial charges. It merely meant he must sacrifice career for friend.

Latour moaned. "I loved Germaine. I hated you for taking her. I remembered that blow and would have taken revenge. But the mistake in coordinates —I wrote them wrong. My field book was stolen but—*Mordieu!* I will straighten it out—tell everything. Take me up, Connery, my body grows cold. It is death—I am afraid."

Connery said gently, "I'll come back, Latour. But Pete, he's—" he broke off sharply, hastily flung Pete Lacey's body across his shoulders.

Latour called. "Dear God, don't go—don't—they'll come and—"

Connery knew other looting Chlueh would come and mutilate Latour so that a man would retch at sight of what had been done. He set his teeth, went on, trying to shut out the pleadings of Latour.

He tottered up the slope, falling, easing the shock on Pete with his own body. He rose, stumbled on. Weakness made him gasp, blinded him.

Behind him he heard the agonized whine of Latour.

"My God, don't leave me. Take me —take me—I swear—"

Connery never knew how he got up that hill. After ten minutes his body wilted under Pete's weight. He could not stand upright himself, so weak he was from loss of blood.

The Chlueh finally came. From below where he had left Latour came one hor-

rified scream. "Connery! Connery!" Mord—" That was all.

CONNERY crouched, halfway up the hill, waiting, watching. His burden stirred.

"Bart, pal," the voice was rattling in the throat.

"Don't talk—we're going in," Connery whispered.

"Pal, about Latour—the—I went—" The voice was drowned in a gush of blood. And during the rest of that incredible climb Connery did not know whether Pete lived or had died. He scarcely knew if he lived himself. He was babbling deliriously when hands gripped him and pulled him across sharp stones. He promptly fainted. . . .

His lackluster eyes next saw the double cover of a medical tent; he smelled ether and medicaments, and turning his head saw Captain Medicin Perout, bloody to his elbows, sweating, working on a blood-stained operating table. Connery lay for a while until he hurt less and his memory returned.

"Senior Corporal Lacey, *mon Capitaine,*" he asked, "how is he?"

With scarcely a glance up from the probe that was extracting a two-ounce chunk of lead from a man's buttocks, the physician said, "I personally saved his life. There, Sergeant, was an operation which I consider among my greatest. You perceive that the knife blade had pierced his lung. An internal hemorrhage had set in. The lungs would drown out, you understand. But I—I, Sergeant, drew off that blood and drove in a perfect glucose solution. Senior Corporal Lacey will live to stop another bullet. I shall write about that operation for the Lancet."

Connery listened to all this and finally turning, saw on a mattress flung across three boards, the limp body of Lacey.

"Did they bring Lieutenant Latour in?"

"The bugler played this morning over what the Chlueh left of Lieutenant Latour. He could never have lived. Twenty-two perforations he had."

Connery grunted. He had hoped against hope that Latour had lived. Now his last hope was gone. He would never see the inside of St. Cyr. Latour's heliograph testimony lived on to convict Connery of Latour's blunder. So he was not even interested when the surgeon mentioned casually that Abd el Kader and his two brothers, his father, and his eight wives had all been captured. He was staring at the gold galons that made an inverted V on his tunic from cuff to elbow. He had been awfully proud of that chevron.

Well, why the hell brood? He closed his eyes and slept until nightfall. When he awoke he saw Lacey on the next cot staring at him.

"Hi yuh, pal?" Connery grinned.

"Where's my uniform?" mouthed Lacey.

Connery looked around. On a bench were the torn, bloody, dirty, olive drab uniforms taken from casualties.

Connery spotted the one with the two green galons, got it and brought it to Lacey's bunk. "There—if it'll make you shut up."

"In that upper lefthand pocket," whispered Lacey feebly. Connery reached into the pocket. His hand came out holding Latour's field dispatch book.

"You—" he began.

"When he was shot I glommed it," Lacey actually grinned. "Before I got knifed myself."

The surgeon approached threateningly. Swiftly Connery thumbed the book, saw the coordinate entry under the specific orders for action. He looked at Lacey, his throat working.

"Latour's mistake," he choked. "Here they are: three-eight-zero-zero-nine, and one-three-zero-zero-six."

Pete's pale grin continued and he looked defiantly at Dr. Perout.

"Write me from St. Cyr, guy."

The lancer was finished.

JOHNNY GURKHA

by Perry Adams

SWIFTLY, the short twilight of the East was turning to night. Peshawar Cantonment, most un-eastern of settlements, commenced to twinkle with thousands of electric lights. Ghana Ghali, youthful sepoy in the King Emperor's Own Gurkha Rifles, watched the last of the ponies disappear from the polo field of the sahib-log, where a game had been in progress, before making his way back to the nearby canvas city which housed the regiment. He trudged through many straight, white-bordered lanes before reaching the lines of his company. A man of his platoon idled outside a tent, smoking. He peered at Ghana through the dusk. "There has been mail; your name was called. Havildar Apelsawmi took the letter for you."

"Ha! Where is he?" Ghana had been waiting for that letter.

The other shrugged. "At this hour—how should I know?"

Ghana made off in the direction of the havildar's tent. Although he was little more than five feet in height and was slightly bow-legged, he carried what there was of him like a ramrod, and an engaging twinkle in his lively brown slant eyes lighted a roundish, yellow face. No matter how unfamiliar you might be with the facial characteristics

of the fighting races of India, you'd have said at once that here was a young fellow different from any.

Despite considerable Rajput blood, he had the high cheekbones of the Flowery Kingdom. Actually, he was no more Chinese than Indian. He and his counterpart in twenty of the best battalions of the Indian army hailed from the rugged, little known independent kingdom of Nepal, which lies between India and Tibet.

Until little more than a year ago, when he had come down into the plains of India to enlist, he had never seen a truly flat piece of ground. The Sub-Himalayas had been his life. Not even the Pathans—famous mountaineers and bigger men by far—could outdo him. His body was all spring steel and live rubber.

He was proud of his ability, even rather vain, and prouder still of his unconquered race. Like most Gurkhas, he was rather inclined to regard India's subjugated millions as social inferiors. Indeed, his greatest pride was that he served their conquerors, the British Raj. Almost since babyhood he had listened eagerly while his father and the *sardars* of the remote village in Lamjang discussed the great white race which ruled Hindustan.

Even though not Hindus—it seemed they worshipped a single unseen God as did those others, the Moslems—these *Angrezi* were said to possess almost godlike virtues. The village elders, none of whom had been to India, insisted that on the word of Lord Chandra, the great Nepalese Prime Minister, this breed of white men was the very soul of honor, ever fair, all wise, all understanding. Yes, so high were the British in Lord Chandra's esteem, that during the world war, entirely unobligated, he had sent untold thousands of his best fighting men to help the Raj.

Ceaselessly had Ghana listened to such talk, until he reached a conclusion well-nigh inevitable: The white men to the south, possessed of the virtues of gods, could be smirched by none of the vices to which ordinary mortals were subject.

Grizzled, wise-eyed old Havildar Apelsawmi, Ghana's mentor and friend, was often the recipient of the youngster's bubbling enthusiasms.

"Have a care, my son," Apelsawmi frequently warned him, "lest you place these white men on too tall a pedestal. Pedestals, you know, are apt to topple."

"A fine way to talk," Ghana would retort. "You—who have lived among them all these years!"

It was strange, Ghana was thinking, as he approached the havildar's tent, that one so experienced could harbor such ideas.

HE FOUND Apelsawmi on the point of departure. No taller than Ghana, his breadth of shoulder was remarkable: in his early forties, he was still rated the finest all-around athlete in a regiment of athletes. Equally outstanding as a soldier, Apelsawmi awaited the viceroy's confirmation of his commission to the rank of jemadar.

"Fine time to pester me for a letter," he said good-naturedly, motioning Ghana into the tent, where he relit the still smoking lamp. Opening his locked barrack box, he abstracted the letter and broke the seal of the envelope without hesitation: Ghana was only just learning to read and write.

"It's in answer to the letter I sent off to Nepal for you," the N.C.O. explained. A pile of ten-rupee notes fluttered to the floor. Ghana retrieved and counted them —ten notes, a hundred rupees.

Apelsawmi glanced up. "A hundred? Correct. Your venerable father sends greetings. He asks why his son requires so much extra money. I—ah—might ask the same thing, young fellow!"

"Eh? Oh, you know—a little bad luck. I—ah—"

"Gambling, eh? Well, we Gurkhas are

all gamblers; it's our national vice. But such a sum! Who's been winning your money, Ghana?"

The young sepoy hesitated. He had been going regularly to the canteen of the Penryth Highlanders, glad that unlike all other races in the Indian army, Gurkhas were permitted to enter the white men's drinking places. Ghana liked the cool, heady Penryth beer; most of all, he liked the funny-skirted, quizzical fellows he found there—hillmen all. He was loath to tell Apelsawmi that he had been losing rather staggering sums to one of their number. Apelsawmi would never understand.

But it seemed the havildar already knew far more than Ghana supposed.

"When you asked me to write for this money I began to wonder," Apelsawmi said. "I found you weren't entangled with a woman; I assumed you *must* be gambling. But unlike yourself, son of a rich landowner in Lamjang, the other sepoys are all poor. They couldn't afford to gamble on such a scale as this indicates. Then I noticed how often you went to the barracks of the Scots. Have you—"

"Yes," truthful Ghana blurted, "but it is all quite fair, I tell you. The men with kilts are my good friends. They—"

"Nevertheless," Apelsawmi interrupted, "what would you do if you discovered a rogue among them?"

"Absurd, havildarjee. There couldn't be!"

"But supposing?" Apelsawmi insisted.

Ghana said soberly: "If that were so, I think I should never again believe in anything or anyone."

"You young fool," Apelsawmi snapped, "you have much to learn! Once I, too, had such ideas as yours. It is the fault of our early teaching at home. Look about you—do you see swarms of malcontents among the older Gurkhas? No! We have accepted the reality for the ideal."

"My thanks for the letter," Ghana said stiffly. His face hard and angry, he left the tent.

The havildar sighed and shrugged as he snapped the lock on his box. Ghana, he knew, was an exceptionally high-strung lad. When the time came he was going to take it hard—just how hard?

GHANA hastened to his tent and changed from mufti into uniform. It was only thus dressed that he could visit the Penryth canteen.

A few moments later, entering the cavernous place, he sensed at once that the regiment must have paid out that day. The smoke filled hall was crowded to suffocation.

At a far corner the Gurkha could just make out his friends, MacTavish and MacNair. As he threaded his way toward them he saw a third man seat himself—Tweedie of the pipe band, instrument under his arm.

Ghana's pulse quickened with pleasure. The vibrant, minor wail of the bagpipes, scaled more to the Oriental ear than to the Occidental notion of conventional music, always gave Ghana a queer sense of exaltation. When he'd had a few beers and Tweedie warmed to his playing, Ghana felt a very prince among princes, invincible, half frantic with a sort of delirious madness. It was while such spells were on him that he would gamble his last *pice*—not cannily, but recklessly, even stupidly, his native shrewdness cast to the four winds.

There in the secluded corner, shielded by a huge supporting pillar from the watchful eyes of the duty sergeant and from these at nearby tables, Ghana would match coins with his Scotch friends. Tweedie had no real taste for it. A quiet little man with coarse red hair that stood up straight like a terrier's, there was a touch of the mystic's look in his absent blue eyes. Ever absorbed by his pipes, he might match a few *dozies* or *charzies* or even an eight-anna bit between tunes and hasty drafts

of beer. Big, black Rab MacTavish, slow-witted, good-humored, was scarcely a better gambler. He'd shake a coin between clumsy, red hands, like as not to have it roll to the floor when he went to "face" it. Always in the end he'd sit back to watch Ghana and Piggy MacNair.

Piggy's long, fine hands never fumbled. Seemingly slow, they moved with an oiled precision often too fast for the eye to follow. Piggy had the hands of an artist.

Ghana, still at a distance, caught Rab MacTavish's eye and waved. The others had their backs to him. It puzzled Ghana that lately he had been losing to MacNair so steadily. While awaiting his father's letter, Ghana had been practically cleaned out, whereupon the Highlander had permitted him to gamble "on the book." Already Ghana owed him thirty rupees. Of course, the luck would change. When Ghana had discharged his debt, seventy rupees would remain. With this stake he was confident he could win back all he had lost —yes, and more. Hadn't he often won in the beginning?

AT THE table, Tweedie blew his bag taut and pensively sounded a few dissonant half-notes.

Rab MacTavish said to Piggy MacNair: "Yon's Johnny Gurkha. Maybe ye'll leave the lad listen to the pipes an' drink his beer in peace. Ye've ta'en ower much o' his siller, I'm thinkin'."

"I willna game wi' him onless he has cash," Piggy conceded.

"Cash or no, 'tis enough, Piggy. There's more than luck t' your winnin'!"

They eyed each other. For just an instant Tweedie glanced up, his face alive with comprehension. He said nothing.

Piggy said coldly, "Ye'll do weel t'mind your ain business, Rab."

Fundamentally so different, these two had known each other, tolerated each other, for a long time. It was an association of habit, of propinquity, not a friendship.

Spots of color showed high on Rab's cheeks. "For a' the brown skin o' him, I like the lad. Ye canna—"

"So?" Piggy's sneer cut him short. "An' are ye the mither an' him the bairn? Someone else wad take him, did I not."

Rab glared, but in the end his eyes fell. He let Piggy have the last word. Rab had always known that if he liked, he could crumble Piggy's soft unhealthy body into a bloody pulp. But one didn't do such things to Piggy. About him hung an indefinable something—a sort of icy reserve—far more protecting than mere brawn.

Ghana reached the table. Besides his native tongue, the Gurkha had Hindustani. Since joining the army he had picked up considerable English as well.

"Empty the mug," he called out gayly. "Ghana has money again." He stood beside the vacant chair, waiting for them to drain the cup. A Gurkha could drink from the same container, but not of the same content as the white men. They might pass the beer from hand to hand, each sipping, as was the custom in a "school." Not he. Hindu scruple prevented it. When it came his turn to drink, he'd swallow the untouched pint in one mighty gulp.

At mention of money, Piggy's cold eyes flickered. "Ye heard from Nepal, I take it?"

Ghana beamed. "*Hán*—this day." He produced the wad of notes from his money belt, counted off three and pushed them toward Piggy. Piggy nodded, his gaze on the crisp white paper Ghana was returning to his belt.

Tweedie finished the beer and Rab snatched up the empty mug before Ghana could reach it. "Na, Johnny. We was paid today. Ye'll drink the first wi' us."

Ghana nodded thanks, sat down. He

was on fire with impatience to try his luck; those notes were burning through his shorts. And the canteen closed at ten, leaving little enough time.

He grinned at Piggy. "We play now, eh?" He deposited some coins on the table, retaining a rupee piece suggestively in his hand.

Piggy hesitated. A slight gesture of delay would, he saw, both placate Rab and serve his own ends, since Ghana was cold sober and not ripe for the plucking.

So Piggy said: "Weel—let's wet our whustles first. No hurry, lad."

Rab returned with the beer. Ghana took the proffered mug and poured the heavy draft down his throat without pause, in accepted Gurkha fashion. Then, jealous of the fleeting minutes, he rushed off to the serving counter, replenished the beer and returned quickly.

"Now play—why not?" he asked, flipping his coin into the air. "I matching you, eh, 'Nair sahib?" He could scarcely feel the single pint of beer, but Tweedie had begun to pipe "Cock o' the North" and the music was getting into his blood.

Piggy shot a sly glance at Rab, who shook his head. Piggy ignored him.

"Guid enou'," he said to Ghana.

They began matching rupees.

AT nine-thirty the duty sergeant rapped the serving counter with his swagger-stick.

"A half hour more, gennulmen."

Throughout the big canteen the tempo had quickened. The strong beer had left a thicker burr on all those heavy Scotch voices. Faces were flushed; men swayed toward each other with meaningless dignity, or argued pointlessly. Little Tweedie had piped many tunes since "Cock o' the North"; the mug had been filled, emptied, many times.

For more than an hour Ghana and Piggy had been at their matching. Ghana had won a few times at first, but now the pile before Piggy was growing steadily. Rab MacTavish watched the play morosely. He had seen three more of Ghana's notes change hands; shortly Ghana would have to get change for another.

Eyes unnaturally bright, the Gurkha became aware that again it was his turn to go for more beer. He rose, picking up the mug.

"I go fill," he said hurriedly.

Calculatingly, Piggy eyed his winnings. They were heavy, but there were still four notes in Ghana's belt.

"Let th' beer go," Piggy suggested. "Ye've leetle time left t'win back what ye've lost."

"But my turn get beer," Ghana pointed out. He saw the long line already ahead of him at the serving counter and would have preferred to fall in with Piggy's suggestion—to play on rather than waste precious minutes. But the instinct to buy his share of the beer was even more compelling than the desire to get some of his own back from Piggy.

The line was getting longer by the second. Aware that their time was growing short, the drinkers were crowding to the counter.

"T'wull be closin' before ye get served," Piggy said.

"Let the lad go," Rab growled.

Piggy looked at him angrily. "Maun ye wallow in beer?" He saw his last chance of winning the rest of Ghana's money slipping away.

"Aye, maybe I maun," Rab said doggedly. "What's ut to ye?"

Ghana stood by uncertainly. His head was a little cloudy with beer now, but the inexplicable clash of wills was not lost on him. He was aware of a new, ugly something which moved just beyond his comprehension. He waited for Piggy's reply, but none came. With a shrug he left them glaring at each other.

When he was lost in the crowd Rab said, "Ye're through for tonight, Piggy.

Ye're winnin' too steady—an' at last I ken why!"

Piggy was a picture of outraged virtue. "Na, na, Rab. The luck's out for him, nowt else."

Rab wasn't dead sure of his ground.

"A' the same," he said, mentally backing away from an out-and-out showdown, "ye'll match no more."

Piggy laughed with quick scorn. "Are ye daft—him wi' a pocketfu' o' notes?"

"What's left wull gae hame wi' him."

"So's he can fritter ut awa' i' th' bazaars? Or lose ut gamin' wi' other Johnnies in his own lot? No likely, Rab, if I can get ut fra' him."

Rab could never come off best in an argument with Piggy. Thwarted, he glowered dourly at the rough, beer-stained table. The three sat through a long, uncomfortable silence. When Ghana finally worked his way back to them, it was a scant five minutes to closing. The Gurkha resumed his seat with eager haste.

"You give me chance now, 'Nair sahib. No more one rupee, one rupee, like that. We take'm five rupees each match—do something quick. Yes?"

Piggy's eyes just flickered. His face remained cold, masklike. "Guid enou' —ye asked for ut. Five chips a crack let ut be, Johnny."

THERE was no five-rupee coin. Any smaller piece would do to represent the amount. Piggy chose a *charzie;* the little silver coin was about the size of a sixpenny bit, or an American dime.

"Don't be a bleddy fool," Rab exploded at Ghana. "Keep what siller ye got left, an' thank God ye still got ut!"

Ghana picked up a rupee, flicked it into the air and smacked it on the back of his hand.

"I match you," he told Piggy.

Piggy's thumb was tight against the base of his forefinger as his palm presumably covered the *charzie.*

"What ye got?" he asked.

Ghana had a tail. Deliberately, Piggy uncovered his own coin.

"Ye lose, Johnny, I've a head."

Ghana sighed, smiled, pushed five rupees across the table. Again they matched. As before, Piggy maneuvered Ghana into being the first to uncover.

All at once Rab's big arm shot across the table. He seized Piggy's right wrist. They struggled briefly, then Rab jerked his hands apart. Instantly Piggy's means of deception was apparent. He had been holding his coin *upright* in the tight slit between thumb and forefinger. Thus, provided he could get Ghana to uncover first—and this was an easy matter with such an unsuspicious opponent—he could always manipulate *his* coin, heads or tails, as the occasion demanded. It was a very ancient trick, yet effective because of Piggy's unusual manual dexterity.

The thing was so quick, so unexpected, that Ghana did not look at Piggy's hands until the coin tinkled to the floor.

Suddenly they were all on their feet as Rab pulled Piggy across the table.

"So I was richt," Rab was whispering, his free hand a menacing fist.

Piggy was curiously white.

Ghana found his voice. "What you meaning, 'Tavish sahib? What you do to 'Nair sahib? Why you doing that?"

In sheer impotence Rab cried, "Och, ye dumb fool, have ye no eyes? Did ye no see? Yon's nowt but a cheap swundler, a *badmarsh.* He—"

Piggy stopped him.

"Rab's juist drunk," he told Ghana coldly.

Tweedie thrust forward his tousled red head. "Rab's no more drunk than me! I seen what ye done. Look here—"

"Ye're both stinkin' drunk!" Piggy's voice was like ice.

A little drunk they might be, as Ghana knew he was himself. But they knew what they were doing; he was sure of that. No, there was something more here; a sense of the same ugly chimera that he had felt writhing just beneath

the evening's muddy undercurrent. Ghana's mind raked back over the last hours, over all those other sessions in which he'd been loser. They said 'Nair had cheated. Could it—had it been true? The belief took sudden form. With it came mounting horror.

As well rob him of his blessed Hindu gods as to destroy the conviction that all sahibs were honest!

Ghana's was suddenly the face of an old man, drained to a dirty olive green. He asked Rab an inevitable question.

"What 'Nair sahib do?"

"I'll show ye," Rab said harshly. And, clumsily but effectively, Rab did.

Very slowly, Ghana raised his eyes from Rab's hands to Piggy.

"You do that, 'Nair sahib?"

They had attracted no particular attention: They were standing around the table—four men who might have been about to leave.

Piggy MacNair shrugged. "Ye didna' see me, did ye?"

Rab flung away with a gesture of thwarted disgust. Tweedie settled his pipes under his arm and followed.

"No, never see," Ghana admitted, "but you not saying if do or not."

Piggy looked severely down his nose. "Onless ye seen me, ye've no richt to ask." Then, as if that disposed of the very thought, he added, "I'm thinkin' I've had ower much o' this nonsense." With an air of finality he scooped up the money, nodded curtly and was gone.

TORN by hideous doubt, Ghana stood motionless. Across the big room the duty sergeant rapped the closing hour. The canteen babu pulled down his flexible shutters; a group he had failed to serve raised their voices in thick protest, but the sergeant shook his head and waved them away. Ghana was aware of none of this. He was still standing rigid, eyes fixed unseeingly on blank wall, when the last of the drinkers disappeared.

The sergeant spied him and came over. "Place is closed, Johnny. What ye waitin' for?"

Aye, what? Like one in a dream, Ghana moved away. He had almost reached the door when a new and even more shattering thought assailed him. If 'Nair were dishonest, so might others of the white men be, too. And if others, why not all?

He stumbled out into the soft darkness. Through his abstraction he heard talk—sahib talk. Knots of men stood about finishing their last drafts of beer, pints carried out at the moment of closing.

In his present black mood, the sound of those voices was too much for Ghana. Why, why had they so cruelly deceived him? How could be ever have trusted them, these Christians? Gods? These?

Suddenly he went completely berserk. Kill, *kill!* Kill them all. From his belt, where it had lain concealed by his tunic, he ripped his deadly national weapon, the *kukri,* a curved knife. With an agonized cry he launched himself at the nearest group.

A figure broke from the deep shadows of the canteen wall—Rab, who had been waiting to speak to Ghana. Rab saw the Gurkha's unmistakable intent.

A silent shadow moving with the speed of light, Ghana's arm was raised to strike the first man in his path. Rab hurtled in at a sharp angle. The impact of his heavy body spun Ghana aside as the terrible blade swished downward, just clear of its intended victim. Both men went to ground, Rab on top.

Blind with red hate, Ghana cut at Rab's face. Rab rolled his head, caught that flailing arm. But the small, wiry Gurkha twisted from the bigger man's grasp and sprang to his feet, snarling.

Again he flew at Rab. The Scot, slower, was helpless on hands and knees. He hadn't a split second to change to a position of defense. Instinctively, he did the only thing that might save him—dropped flat on his stomach. Ghana

tripped over him. The blade of the *kukri* was buried in the ground.

Before Ghana could recover his wind, Rab had him in a full nelson and jerked him to his feet. Ghana's insanity vanished as quickly as it had come. He went limp in Rab's arms. Half seen in the darkness, faces were all about them.

A man said: "Hold hard, Rab, 'til I bash the daft little de'il."

Then Ghana, face away from Rab in the hold, knew for the first time who gripped him.

Rab said quickly, "Na na. 'Tis ower, d'ye ken. Leave him be. He'll do nowt now."

To prove it, he released Ghana. Silently, the Gurkha recovered his *kukri* and returned it to his belt. The canteen habitués were used to drunken rows; many were not even aware that Ghana had drawn a knife. They saw the fun was over and began to drift away.

Rab took Ghana's arm and started walking him toward the road. Ghana pulled his arm free.

"Goob-by, 'Tavish." The sahib part was missing. "White men no good for Ghana. I go back Nepal."

They faced each other at the roadside.

"Ye're goin' to desert?" Rab muttered.

"I go away, yes."

"Aw, ye mustna' do it, lad. They'd shoot ye sure. Tonicht's—tonicht's juist a leetle thing soon forgot. Think it ower first. Gie it a few days' thought."

Ghana turned without further speech, and set off down the road, leaving Rab staring after him.

He moved along at the rifleman's quick pace, a hundred and forty to the minute. He knew exactly what he was going to do. There was, first, the matter of shedding his uniform. Mufti lay in his barrack box. He'd wait until the others were asleep, then steal quietly away. He would avoid the much traveled road to Khatmandu, would strike off west from Raxaul, heading directly for Lamjang. Home! Home, where false whites never penetrated.

Far behind him a bugle sounded the notes of the Penryth regimental call; he paused, waiting for the brief "Lights Out."

"I'm going to be late after all," he thought.

But "Lights Out" was not sounded. Instead, he heard the "General Assembly," then the quick, staccato "At the Double." Off to his right a trumpet picked up the same refrain—that would be from the artillery lines. And now from all sides—everywhere, it seemed—bugles and trumpets were coming to life:

"Fall in A, fall in B,
Fall in all the compan-ee!"

A small new breeze fanned Ghana's cheek, as if the God of War, roused from slumber, had blown a breath into the night, sending forth his message to the sprawling station. For just an instant Ghana thought he heard a burst of firing.

Headlights coming up behind cast his bobbing shadow far ahead, genie-like, grotesque. Driven at furious pace, the machine whined by; he heard the tires scream at a corner, saw the pivoting lights flash across a white bungalow, then straighten out into the road to General Headquarters.

At the next intersection he was cut off by a jingling black mass which, closer, dissolved into a signal company on the march. Laden mules streamed by to the left of the road; a heavy cable wagon followed, and more mules. British and Indian personnel, step broken, moved silently along. Ghana made out one of his countrymen, a man of the Khas.

"What is it—where do you go?" Ghana called out in Khaskura.

"A big attack by the Zakka Khel Afridis," the marcher replied stolidly. "It is said they are massing in the gardens by the city walls."

The unit passed, leaving a thick pall of choking, invisible dust. Ghana hurried on. The gods of his fathers knew—and understood.

AT dawn Ghana's brigade formed a semicircle about the tangled mass of undergrowth and ravines, loosely termed "gardens," which extended to the very walls of Peshawar City.

As Ghana and the whole garrison knew, the previous afternoon the city police, augmented by armored cars, tanks, machine guns and detachments of Poona Horse and some British cavalry, had with difficulty quelled a typically sanguine riot in the main bazaar. Although several Afridis of the Zakka Khel had been arrested, the affair had been dismissed as without special significance.

Actually, several thousand Zakkas had followed hard on the heels of those caught in the riot. This large party had been split up, to approach Peshawar in small, inconspicuous groups. Several hours after the rioting, by sheer accident a scout plane observer spotted a formidable *lashkar* congregating in the gardens. During the early evening the British made overtures to the Zakka chieftains, urging them to disperse and go home. To no avail: the mullahs, ever prone to make trouble, had already stirred the gathering to a frenzy of religious fervor. Mobilization of the First Brigade followed.

In the now rapidly increasing light, Ghana's regiment and the Penryth Highlanders idled side by side in one of the dry river beds which honeycombed the district.

With a start, Ghana saw a thing of which he had been unaware in the darkness: Piggy MacNair was in the very platoon which overlapped his own. He saw MacTavish and Tweedie as well, but the latter seemed to be keeping to themselves. Scots and Gurkhas began mingling freely, as was their wont. But Ghana, after that first surprised recognition, sat morosely aloof. Yesterday the prospect of a good, hot fight against Afridi infidels, of perhaps joining the Penryths in a shoulder-to-shoulder bayonet charge, would have filled Ghana with delight. Now all that was changed. In his black depression, he had prayed long and passionately that he might not survive the day's fighting.

The terrible blade swished downward.

With lackluster eyes, at last he looked up. Piggy MacNair was even nearer than before. Ghana wondered suddenly if the others could have unjustly accused the gambler—another angle to that torturing doubt!

"When we advance, if the gods grant my wish, I shall never see him again," Ghana reasoned. If ever, *now* was the time to get a straight answer from 'Nair's own lips: to know whether 'Nair

was guilty, or the victim of false accusation. Either way, Ghana felt his faith had been destroyed beyond repair.

Ghana stood up, his naive, good-humored mouth thin with determination. Straight toward Piggy he walked, eyes never leaving him, bumping and stumbling over other Gurkhas in his progress.

All at once he felt giant arms around him, heard Apelsawmi's voice.

"Let it go," the havildar whispered, his instinct a bridge to comprehension. "Have you no better sense than to want to fight a white man—and on duty, too? You are a fool!"

Strong as Ghana was, he was powerless in the other's grip.

"We Gurkhas in India are all fools," he said bitterly. "Fools to be wasting our lives serving such false friends as the British."

The fall-in whistle was blown. Apelsawmi, now that Ghana's moment of red hate seemed past, gave him a little shove toward his platooon mates.

"Come to me when we return to barracks," the havildar said kindly. "In a different way, you are as wrong now as you were before!"

Mechanically Ghana took his place with the others. Ready to advance, they manned the river bank as they might the parapet of a trench. While they waited tensely, a squadron of bombers passed overhead, wings glistening in a sun which had not yet reached those on the ground. Seconds later Ghana felt the earth shudder as a series of shattering explosions announced that the egg-laying had begun.

Apparently detailed to go in and mop up, off to the left a lancer regiment filed across a shallow section of the river bed. On the far side they formed; lines of lance tips, pennants fluttering, were just visible. Then, with a hoarse roar, they were off. Bombing ceased. Circling above, planes awaited the result of the charge.

A wall of tribal rifle fire met the lancers head on. The volume of fire was surprising, ominous. The tribesmen were far from dispersed. What was the fate of that invisible charge? No one in the river bed could tell.

A sudden piercing whistle, and company commanders were giving the signal to advance. Bayonets fixed, Gurkhas and Highlanders scrambled up the bank. The line had advanced scarcely a hundred yards when dozens of riderless horses, eyes rolling, nostrils distended with panic, came galloping back from the inferno ahead.

A splendid bay bore down on Ghana. The *sowar* who only a few moments before had raced forward on the animal's back, now dragged along the ground, foot caught in stirrup. His warm, dead body spattered a crimson trail. Ghana leaped aside as the horse tore by, blind with terror of the flapping horror he could not outrun.

On pressed the infantry. Lancers and their mounts, still or flopping about with a terrible aimlessness, dotted the ground. And then the remainder of what had been a regiment appeared, reeling in their saddles, lances lost or splintered. A young second lieutenant passed close to Ghana. His arm supported a wounded risaldar, who would otherwise have slid to earth. Helmetless, blood streaming from face and neck, the youthful officer was crying like a baby, crying in sheer baffled rage. It was his first blood bath, his first taste of what war was really like. Somehow, the Sandhurst textbooks hadn't quite prepared him for—this!

But if the gallant charge had proved futile, at least it had served to drive the Afridis from the tall underbrush. Nearing its edge, for the first time Ghana was able to look some distance ahead. The country was even more rugged, but barren. A strong force of Afridis had occupied an oval-shaped plateau which towered steeply out of converging dry river beds—a fortress carved by erosion.

Their movements masked to the enemy by the last of the high vegetation,

Gurkhas and Penryths halted, while their officers retired to confer. Now that the lancers were out of the picture, an air attack seemed to Ghana the obvious method of dislodging the tribesmen. But it wasn't to be so easy as that.

"When the lancers charged," the company commander presently explained to his men, "the Afridis ambushed nearly a half squadron. They have carried their prisoners to the plateau. To bomb or shell the position now would mean sure death to our own people.

"It's a solo job for infantry," he smiled slowly. "For Gurkhas and Penryths together—a company of each. We have been selected. We are to storm that plateau and, if possible, rescue the lancers." He regarded them proudly. "The attack up that sheer cliff will be hard, but no task is too great for Gurkhas. You are purified. Before dawn you made *puja* and I know you are ready."

STILL screened by the tall vines and bushes, the company re-formed in open order and in two waves. The Afridis commenced firing as the first wave moved into the open. Ghana, with the second, followed a moment later. Once in the open, the sight of towering Rab MacTavish told him that MacNair, a member of the same platoon, could not be far off.

The Afridis had had no time to build the conventional protecting *sangar*. They hardly needed it: circling the forward lip of the plateau, a fold in the ground offered adequate cover to men lying prone.

And the tribal marksmen were making good use of this advantage. As the front wave reached the foot of the slope, Ghana saw it melt under the withering fire from above. The British party hadn't fired a shot. Craftily the Afridis had forced the prisoners to display heads and shoulders, were using the unfortunate lancers as shields.

The depleted first wave paused to consolidate. Then, bayonets winking in the sun, they went pelting up the slope in an old-fashioned charge. Bad tactics, for those who reached the objective would be winded and in no condition for the inevitable hand-to-hand struggle. Yet without a barrage to keep down tribal fire, it was all too obvious that if the attackers did not hasten, none would be left to storm the plateau.

The second wave reached terrain where the first had left many casualties. Scot and Gurkha lay together, or crawled, or sat stupidly watching as their comrades pressed on. A Penryth Ghana knew slightly had been struck in the thigh. Doubled under him, his legs were covered by his kilt. As he twisted and turned in agony, he looked like an animated penwiper. But the animation was fast leaving him; his trunk sagged forward as if the penwiper's handle were of wax too soft to withstand the blazing sun. Everywhere swarms of evil green flies buzzed ghoulishly. A sickening, pungent stench soured the dry, hot air. Already hundreds of buzzards wheeled in the coppery sky.

Over the top swarmed the first of the attackers; the prisoners, momentarily unguarded, snatched up what arms they could and joined them. At once the tribesmen rallied and the first line was in dire straits when Ghana's party arrived. Followed a series of savage personal battles, with no rules save the survival of the fittest.

Through the dust haze Ghana plunged his bayonet into the stomach of a red-bearded Zakka—a Hadji—who, in turn, had just brained a Highlander. Filled with primitive blood-lust, the Gurkha jerked his bayonet clear and tried to save a lancer's life by blowing off the top of his opponent's head. But the lancer was finished. The Afridi had bitten a great chunk from his throat and the two fell together in a welter of gore.

Although the action now lacked co-

herency, Ghana became aware of a gradual surge to the right, and soon found himself close to the plateau's far side. This was even steeper than the face the attackers had used—it was all but perpendicular. Even as he looked, a kiltie struggled with two spearmen at its very brink. A kiltie—Piggy MacNair.

A hasty glance to his left told Ghana that the tide of battle had momentarily swung away. He, Piggy and Piggy's assailants were in a little world of their own. It was as if the gods of destiny, grimly ironic, had set the stage. For just a breath Ghana hesitated: Why not leave Piggy to his fate?

But to the very core, Gurkhas are sportsmen. 'Nair *might* be innocent—he must have the benefit of the doubt!

With a deep-throated growl Ghana leaped toward the swaying figures; and saw that the instant's hesitation might prove fatal to Piggy. For the white man, twisting as he parried a spear thrust, left himself wide open to the second point. With his bayonet Ghana batted at the spearman's upraised arm; he hoped to deflect the aim from that unmissable target.

Too late. Where the arm had been was only thin air. The spearhead plunged into Piggy's chest. Ghana's rifle swirled down in a futile arc, swinging him off balance. He went to his knees. In that instant the bank crumbled and the others disappeared.

Like a rubber ball the Gurkha bounded up and peered over the edge. In a tight snarl of arms and legs the three men were sliding and falling toward the river bed, more than two hundred feet below. If they survived the mad drop, the tribesmen's first act would be to administer the *coup de grace* to the wounded Piggy.

BORN hillman that he was, Ghana's next move was instinctive. With both hands he grasped his Lee-Enfield by the muzzle, just beneath the bayonet boss, the rifle's butt end trailing behind under his arm.

He jumped, struck the almost sheer side twenty feet from the top. Stiff-legged, he made his body a sort of pivot between his heels and the outflung butt, now skidding through the earth behind his right shoulder. It was a method of rapid descent indentical to that used by alpinists when glissading with their ice-axes. With the rudderlike butt he could control his direction and, by leaning back, to some extent his speed. But he did not lean back.

Near the bottom the face curved outward. Ghana overtook the others as they slowed on the more gentle slope. All were still in motion as the Gurkha, freeing one hand, reached for his *kukri*. Before they slid to a halt, he dispatched one Afridi with three lightning-like stabs. The other, aware of Ghana for the first time, got groggily to his feet and pulling his spear from Piggy, made a sluggish lunge.

The Gurkha was more than a match for this taller, heavier opponent. He dropped to one knee and the thrust, shoulder high, passed harmlessly over his head. The Zakka, unable to prevent his body from following through, tripped over Ghana and impaled himself on the bayonet. As the steel slid home, Ghana mercifully pulled the trigger.

Piggy lay on his back, just as he had fallen. Through his long fingers, laced effigy-like across the gaping chest wound, his life's blood pumped steadily, remorselessly. His legs were drawn up, his boot soles were flat on the ground. A red froth oozed through slightly parted lips; absurdly, with each labored breath pink bubbles formed and floated off to burst in the still air. He blinked slowly, languidly, as if he might soon fall asleep.

Ghana replaced the helmet so that it shaded the wounded man's face. Presently Ghana noticed that Piggy stared at him. The shallow gray eyes were cold as ever; and yet somehow oddly

changed, newly reflective, as if all his life were passing in review.

Ghana loosed Piggy's equipment and ripped the sodden grayback down to his waist. Field dressings from both haversacks were scarcely more than chips in that mighty flow. Over them Ghana wound first Piggy's puttees, then his own.

Ghana gave Piggy a little water. It was in the Gurkha's mind to carry him toward help; the rest of the brigade would be coming up. He suddenly knew such a move would be impossible. Yet he must do something.

"I go, try find doctor sahib," he said.

But the shadows were creeping close to Piggy and he did not want to be left alone.

"Na, Johnny, don't ye go." The whisper was thick, difficult. He beckoned Ghana closer. "Ye mustna' think there's many bad 'uns like me, Johnny. Rab, Jock, them others—guid lads all. I—"

He was trying to say something more, for his time was short. He and he alone of the white men had known of Ghana's blind faith; and knowing, had traded on it—time, time again.

Aye. And now that the shadows hovered close, with awful certainty he sensed their message. He was struggling to say something, to explain before it was too late.

"Come—close. I cheated ye, lad. Last nicht—other nichts. Ye see, I—"

But the shadows were right down, right on him now. And perhaps he had said enough. He smiled at Ghana—a small, secret smile unmarred by malice or guile or insincerity.

And then along the line of his jaw a muscle twitched and he died.

Ghana stared down at Piggy inscrutably. He had wanted to live, this dead cheat, while he, Ghana, who had wanted to die, lived.

It came to him that in the shock of that last minute confession, Piggy had laid a ghost. He had been a rogue, he was of the earth, but he was human, and so understandable. No paragon of godlike virtue lay there at Ghana's feet. He saw at last that far from being gods, these were men like himself. 'Nair had been a black sheep: Were there not *badmarshes* among the Gurkhas, too? Among all races? Why condemn the many for the few?

And 'Nair's words cleared the other two of false accusation. With a warm rush of emotion, Ghana realized that their sole purpose, their only desire, had been to befriend him.

Had they survived the action, he wondered—that broad, dark friend and the little red man of the pipes? He stood up, eyes shining, to find himself surrounded by men of the two regiments, Rab and Jock Tweedie among them. Havildar Apelsawmi, too.

"We seen ye jump after Piggy," Rab said heartily, "but we was close pressed 'n could do nowt t'help. Reinforcements come 'n we pushed the tribesmen off the heights. Air force is chasin' 'em back intwa their hills. We come soon's we could."

"Why did ye risk your life for Piggy?" little Tweedie asked accusingly. "D'ye think he'd o' done as much for ye?"

Even in his native tongue Ghana could scarcely have put all his thoughts into words. How then, express himself in a jargon of Hindustani and English?

"Some time one man die," he said haltingly, with a glance at Piggy, "and so make live men better friends."

Old Apelsawmi put a hand on his shoulder.

"Today you have been born again, my son."

"You know, then? You understand?"

"Enough. The boy you were yesterday lies dead beside that one on the ground. Him whom I touch—is a man!"

"Get him mad an' you got him!"

THE LAST SHOT

by Barry Scobee

RAGGED, distant rifle fire on the Southwestern springtime breeze brought McElroy's kid and his little black horse to a startled, listening stop.

The thirteen-year-old boy was poignantly aware that the firing might be the cattlemen of the region making their threatened raid. They had warned the big-framed and gently stubborn McElroy to take his sheep and his brat and get out of this cow country, or take the consequences.

The kid's gaping ears caught the heavy *chugg* of his father's huge old octagonal-barrel rifle, then one more shot—the sharp splitting crack of a more modern gun. Then stillness, save for the afternoon breeze pushing at the brush.

"If they've got dad—!" the kid blazed, and shook the bushy little black into as much of a run as the horse could accomplish along the spine of the brushy, rock-strewn ridge.

"Do yo' best, Bushy—we got to get down there!"

So preoccupied were boy and horse in taking the hard going that, after a mile and a half, when they broke out into an open space, they came upon the cowman on the dun horse without seeing him first.

"Hyeard you comin'," the man said grimly. "We lookin' f'r you."

"Well, you see me," the kid rasped, pulling up.

"Head east." The man thumbed bluntly in that direction. "Keep a-goin'."

"Sez you—and who else?"

"Sez Pouch Pouncy, and me, and the rest o' the cowmen."

"What was that shooting I heard down towards our camp?" the boy demanded.

"You going to head east?"

"No!"

The man jerked down his rope and began to lengthen the loops with savage jerks of his stubby hands. The kid went white under his wind-tan.

"You damn mutton-eatin' sheepherders, you been warned twict," the cowman stormed, "to git yo' grass-killin' woollies outa this cow country. Now git!"

"But I got to let dad know!" the youngster cried. "I can't go traipsing off without him and the sheep."

"You goin' to ride back east of this line o' hills and tell the mob of sheepmen to stay outa this cow country, that's what you goin' to do!" The man had the rope moulded now into a six-ply club. "Tell 'em 'fore they come flowin' over the hills with a hunnerd thousand woollies. Tell 'em what happened to your pa, and tell them that's what they'll git."

"What happened to pa?" the kid shrilled. "What you done to us?"

"Shot the old fool, that's what! Now git, you sheepherdin' brat, and carry the word."

McElroy's boy kicked with his spurs and jumped his wiry black in an effort to get past the man and race for it. But the man twisted the big dun across their path. The rope club swung and struck the black across the face, swung again over the boy's back in a blow that almost knocked him from the saddle. Then the man was at him and the horse, clubbing savagely with the shortened rope.

"Git out! Git out!" he shouted.

The kid's horse, screwing backward to escape the blows, got his heels into a jumble of rocks and sat down. The youngster's mouth was tight; he was not the sort to squall. His old hog-leg six-gun was strapped to the saddle-horn. He wrenched it from its scabbard with both hands. The flailing rope struck him across the face. The big gun roared point-blank into the dun's face. The great slug blew the horse down like a slammed door. The man's leg was under the body. The bone cracked as sharply as a little pistol shot.

"Gawd, you've busted my laig!" the man yowled. "Git him off o' my laig!"

For a second the kid hesitated, appalled at what he had done. But the man was clawing for his short-gun. The boy jumped his rearing black across the sprawling figures and went leaping into the brush. A shot, two shots, popped after him. Then he was over the edge of the ridge and pounding breakneck down the broken slope.

McELROY'S kid could see the ruin that had been done before he reached it. The pole-and-dirt roof of their little stone house, built with fond labor, had been thrown off, the walls partly prodded down. Blue smoke drifted lazily from the gaping interior. The flock of a thousand sheep was nowhere on the flat. And once, when the bushy little black hesitated, picking his way down the rocky steps, the boy saw their yearling pup running about, heard his whimpering. And saw his father spread out prone on the ground.

"Dad!" The boy was out of his saddle before the horse could stop. "Gawd, dad, I'll find out who done this—"

Grim, raw-boned old McElroy rolled his head and opened his eyes.

"Dad, they ain't got you yet!"

"They've got me, Flicker." The man's great hand raised to Flicker's knee and one of his rare smiles lighted his stern face. "Got the old rifle, too. Their last shot broke the stock and tore me up inside."

"Who fired that last shot, dad? Who fired it and got you?"

Old McElroy shook his head, placatingly.

"That won't do, boy—you can't go

getting him. You hit out, Flicker, while the hitting's good. Them outlaw cowmen . . . . going to rope-flog you out of the country . . . . After they drove our sheep over the high cliff they come up here and shot my horse, and the packhorse, and burned the shack. I played dead and heard 'em talking. They won't let you stay, son . . . . they're going to rope-flog you out."

"Not till I get the damn cowman that got you, dad!" Flicker's excited, bony fingers shook his father a little. "Who got you, dad? Who fired that last shot?"

McElroy's big hand gently wrapped around both of Flicker's and held them still.

"I admire your sentiment, son. . . . But don't hold animosity. It was a fair fight."

"Fair! And them damn cowmen trying to drive us out of the country!"

"Fair fight, in a way. I picked off two of them before they got me . . . . Don't go trying to kill the man that got me, son. Don't never kill for revenge. You hit out now, 'fore they come back here and find you."

"Run?" shrilled Flicker. "Quit?"

The fierce pride flared again in the old man's face, then fell away.

"Listen, Flicker. All my life I've rode with the wind in my teeth, when I could have sailed with the breeze. Came west when I could have stayed in the east side of the state. Brung sheep when I might have brung cattle. Stayed here when we could have got out safe. . . . Don't be a fool like me, Flicker."

"Dad, while you can, tell me who got you—that last shot?"

"No, Flicker. Don't kill just to get even. I never kicked over a man's jug to spill the water for spite. I never nussed a grudge. . . .Crack a friendly joke with your hangman, son, and eat his vittles, but don't kill for revenge . . . worse things than killin' to do to a man. . . . Forget who shot me, son, and hit out."

"You're just thinking of me, dad—trying to protect me. But hell, I'm a man now. I'm thirteen."

"A man!" The old hand patted the young ones. "Don't ride with the wind in your teeth. Don't kill onless there's good to go with it, for yourself. Bury me not on the lone prair—oh, hell, I don't mean that . . . . Bury me in a grave dug six feet due east and west and six feet perpendicular—no-no, son, I don't mean that either. . . . Pull out. . . . rope-flog my boy. . . ."

FLICKER dug a grave six feet due east and west, as he could guess it by the lowering sun, but not six feet perpendicular, because he had to hurry. He heard and saw two men bring down the man with the cracked leg from the ridge, and saw them ride slowly away to their camp, miles distant. Saw two others quit the boy-hunt and ride campward. He set up the two pieces of his dad's old rifle for head and foot markers. Heard riders coming down the hill in the dusk, and hid, holding the growling pup tight against his leg to keep him from spilling the beans.

"By ginny," one of the three riders exclaimed as they passed the ruins, "looky at that! If the brat ain't been here plantin' his old man!"

"Yeh. Bet he's beatin' the hills himself, now, getting back to the damned desert where sheepherders belong."

"He damn well better be—if he knows what's his medicine in this cow country."

When they were out of sight in the darkness Flicker lifted up to Bushy's back and rode after them.

Later he could hear the night guard crooning persuasively to a big herd. He circled the dull blotch in the darkness and rode softly, like a black ghost, straight up to the bright camp-fire. Twenty men, or more, were busy with supper, or with bedrolls. They did not

notice him until he slid from his horse well within the firelight. Then they gaped —while he stood there, slit-eyed and silent, with his right arm over the bushy-maned neck of his horse.

"By God, look who's here!" came a swaggering rumble. "The sheepherder's brat."

Flicker had seen the man twice before. His wide pouchy cheeks gave him the nickname of Squirrel-pouch, Pouncy. He was short, a wrestler built to the ground. It was said that he could slam a man down as he would a calf or dog, hard enough to smash his bones. He bawled angrily now:

"Whatta you doin' here?"

"Come to find out who shot my dad," said Flicker thinly. "Who fired that last shot?"

"What you'll find out," Pouncy growled, "is the feel of a cowboy's cat-o'-nine-tails on your back."

He snatched up a saddle rope from the dusty ground and began to shape it into a short bunch. Three or four men quit whatever they were doing and found ropes. Pouncy moved forward, his rope ready.

"Goin' to give you a floggin' you'll cry about f'r a month, to them other damn sheepmen east o' the hills."

Men bunched forward in compact threat, some with ready ropes. Flicker brought his arm from Bushy's neck. His old hog-leg six-gun was in his hand. He punched it at them, at Pouncy, with both his skinny paws.

"You hit me with that thing, Pouncy," he droned thinly, "and you'll be bendin' over with lead in your belly."

Pouncy was within whip-reach. He set all brakes and stopped with a grunt. Two or three cow-waddies tittered. Flicker's thumb yanked the huge hammer back to cock.

"Come and get it!" he invited.

Men hung in their tracks. Death stuttered in the still night. The McElroy's pup, half collie and half short-haired breed, got up and whimpered and sat down again by Flicker's boot. Then suspense was broken by a placid old Mexican cook, who rose from the fire and held out to Pouncy a pan filled with supper.

"Battah eat, boss, 'fore chuck gets cold."

Pouncy dropped the rope. He laughed, falsely. Men turned their eyes on him in curious appraisal, and Flicker sensed that Pouncy was glad of an excuse to back out.

"Anything I don't like, it's cold grub," said Pouncy, and Flicker caught the false note again.

Exultation gurgled in him. If Pouncy had fired that last shot, and had a streak of yellow—Flicker burned with sudden daring. He laughed insolently, and as the men resumed their eating and bed-arranging, he squatted easily by the Dutch ovens, laid the hog-leg between his feet, and proceeded to fill a pan with beef and beans.

"What!" exclaimed a man, half bantering, half hard. "You stooping to eat cowmen's chuck? Wouldn't think you'd 'sociate with beef-eaters."

"I wouldn't cut off my nose to spite my stummick," allowed Flicker generously. "I'd crack a joke with my hangman. Wouldn't you"—he asked the wrestler cow-camp boss with a studied pause—"wouldn't you, Pouncy?"

Pouncy said nothing.

"Damn you," thought Flicker with a lean shrewdness that old McElroy had given him, "you've got a yalla streak." And he skinned an eye over the camp to see how he could make use of the weakness.

A BIG tarpaulin was draped over two wheels of the chuck wagon spread out on the ground. From the first a man had been sitting on the tarp thumbing a deck of cards. Another man now lighted a lantern and hung it on a forked

stick thrust into the ground close by.

"Front and center, poker players," he invited. "We ought to settle this battle tonight."

Pouncy slid his emptied pan along the ground and got up, wiping his hands on his pants.

"Damn tootin' we goin' to settle it," he allowed. "Pouncy needs dough. We can give the kid his needin's later on."

Flicker studied the man. The fellow had truculency in every swaggering movement, in his voice—sore because he'd backed down from a kid, sore because men had snickered. Flicker sensed it without spotting it in words, and played a hunch.

"How much is the admission into yo' game?" he called across.

"What!" came the bantering, half hard voice from the man who had lighted the lantern. "Want in the poker game, too, huh? We could sho' use ten dollars of new money in this game. Jesse James, theh, and me and Squirrel-Pouch have got all the payday corralled. And I about got them two cleaned. They need some new funds to dabble with."

"Five dollars would be an acceptable donation," said the man referred to as Jesse James. "Even greasy sheep money."

Flicker put down his empty pan, took up his huge gun, gave his britches a hitch up, and moved for the lighted spot.

"Dad always said," he observed silkily, "if you can catch a man in a game who's sore you can bounce him for a loss."

"Who's sore?" Pouncy rasped.

Flicker crowded in with his back to the draped wagon sheet, sat down cross-legged, laid his gun across his boots, and tossed a ten dollar bill on the canvas.

"God-a-mighty," beamed Jesse James, and the other man, called Fort, plucked up the bill and kissed it, then began counting out silver change from a sack.

"Sho' hate to give a lamb a fleecin'," he said, "but the lamb is askin' fo' it."

Flicker opened on the first deal. Fort made a small bet, and Flicker stayed out. When the hand was finished Flicker laid down his cards face up, showing two jacks for openers. Likewise, when the next hand was completed, he faced his cards up, exposing two small pairs.

"Sho', boy, you ought to drawed to that," Fort deplored. "You might of got a full."

Flicker grinned.

He passed two or three hands, then drew a pat straight. But again he stayed out and exposed his cards when the betting was finished. The men stared at him.

"Hell, kid, you going to lose your money right quick," said Jesse James. "You had Squirrel-pouch's three queens beat."

Flicker shook his head. "Wasn't good enough for my money."

Then, two hands farther along, he called a fifty cent bet and raised it the same amount. Fort and Jesse James called, and Pouncy raised a dollar. Flicker accepted and raised two dollars. Fort dropped out, but Jesse James called. Pouncy tipped it two dollars more. And Flicker pounced on it eagerly with a call and shoved in all he had left for a raise. James backed out, but Pouncy studied Flicker with boring eyes. Most of the men were squatted around now, watching. Flicker waited, with a little triumphant grin. And it bluffed Pouncy.

"Damn if I will," he said shortly, and tossed his cards away.

Flicker raked in the healthy pot and spread his cards, dots up. They lacked even one little pair.

FLICKER had sat at his father's elbow and watched him play poker many a time with men. He and his father had passed a hundred evenings playing with matches. Old McElroy had often said there were three ways to play poker. Play your hand for just what it was

worth. Play hunches. Play particularly against the man who wanted hardest to win.

"Hunches are the hardest to play," he would say. "Hunches are the whispers of the gods and you got to be tuned to catch 'em. But a man rock-hard to win will overplay his hands. And hardness shuts out his luck. Get him mad on top of that and you've got him, if you keep cool."

Flicker lost a few small hands, and won a few. The McElroy pup sat at Flicker's elbow, whimpering a little now and then like a tired boy wanting to go to bed, and sometimes watching Pouncy with cold yellow eyes.

"He doesn't think I'll try another bluff," Flicker decided after a while. "That's the size of his mental build-up, as dad used to say."

So Flicker, using the shrewdness that he had absorbed from his games with his father, sneaked up on the game. Without any flourish he got the other three players in for a dollar each, and eased in with another dollar. He had tried this once, then when Pouncy stepped in with a stiff bet he dropped out. But this time Pouncy did not raise. Jesse James did. Flicker saw the dollar raise, and raised with another dollar. Teasing them along. Fort smelled a mouse, or had no cards, and dropped out. James stayed, doubtfully. And Pouncy pounced in with a ten dollar tilt. With a gurgle of joy Flicker called and raised with all he had, nearly twenty dollars.

"Damn your sheep eyes," Pouncy growled. "Are you bluffin' again?"

Flicker held still, grinning, waiting, apparently burning with eagerness.

"No, you ain't," Pouncy decided. "You wouldn't try that twict in the same spot." And he threw down his cards.

He had a small full house. Flicker tossed his down, face-up. Pouncy's thick wrestler's fingers slid them open. Flicker had nothing. His high was a ten-spot. Pouncy cursed, and murder was in his eyes.

"In this here interlude," Flicker drawled, "I'd like to ast, who killed my dad this afternoon? Who fired that last shot?"

Silence tightened over the men. The pup whimpered uneasily and trotted out and squatted by the shaggy little black horse.

"Did you, Pouncy?" Flicker whispered.

His hand dropped to the butt of his gun. Men shifted. And the old cook spoke up.

"Battah not shoot keed, boss," he said. "You keel heem, all right. But talk, she git aroun'. Hang on a man's back long time, say, 'That man, he shoot a keed.' Mak trouble. No good."

"Deal the cards!" Pouncy growled.

POUNCY began to play savagely. He dragged in pot after after pot from Jesse James and Fort. Flicker played cautiously, watching Pouncy, studying the man with slitted eyes and tight boyish mouth, hearing again, better than at the time, what his father had said: "Don't kill a man for revenge." He pushed in harshly once with four kings, and won only from Fort and James, because Pouncy laid down. An hour of this and he and Pouncy had nearly all the money. Then he drew on the deal a three of hearts and the six, seven, eight and nine of spades—a four-card straight flush.

"Been more money lost on four pasteboards running straight in color and figgers," old McElroy had warned Flicker many times, "than any other combination in the deck."

Flicker opened and bet a dollar. Pouncy called and raised five dollars. Flicker pondered, and called the raise. No more.

On the draw he got the ten of spades. A straight flush! His heart hammered under his thin shirt. Pouncy called for

one card also. Looked at it close to his shirt.

"Pass the bet," he said, studying Flicker with smoldering eyes.

Flicker saw his baggy jowls quiver faintly.

"He's got something," Flicker thought, and said, "I bet ten bucks, Pouncy, and watch you pull in your horns."

"Yip!" Pouncy joyously. "Call the ten and lay you fifteen more. Purty quick I have all the money and we get to bed."

"To bed, Pouncy?" Flicker questioned softly. "To bed before you rope-flog me?"

The men regarded Pouncy covertly. Two or three laughed.

"Price of beef's coming down," said Flicker. "You were a bull worth a lot of money this afternoon. Your price is dropping."

"Damn your sheepherdin' soul!" Pouncy snarled, and his hand dropped to his gun.

In the tautness came the even gentleness of the old Mexican cook.

"Battah not, boss. Keel a keed, the rep-reputation, she hang on yo' back like the puma-cat. In town, at roundups, men, they look at you weeth the corner of the eyes. They wheesper, 'He shoot a keed.' You don' hear that wheesper, but you know they sayin' it. Purty soon you have to leave country—but the rep, she foll' you like a dog. She no good, keel keed."

"What you goin' to do?" Pouncy growled at Flicker.

"I'm calling your fifteen dollars, and betting all I've got, which is sixty more."

"I haven't got that much—"

"How much have you got?"

"About thirty-five."

"Shove it in."

Pouncy counted and placed the rest of his money. Flicker counted his and put it in.

"Got you bested by twenty-six dollars and forty cents, Pouncy."

"Pull it down. I can't meet it."

"You've got cattle, Pouncy."

"What d'y want, a steer?"

"And horses, Pouncy. You've got horses."

"All right. I'll put a frazzle-tail bay I got in my string agin your twenty-six bucks."

"You're picking the horse, Pouncy," Flicker baited. "You afraid to let me do the picking? Haven't you got any confidence in your cards?"

"Hell, yes!" snorted the squat cowman. "I got you beat with this yere hand. Go ahead and pick yo' hoss."

"I don't want a horse, Pouncy."

"What the hell do you want?" Pouncy rumbled. "Whadda ya talkin' horse fur if you don't want a horse?"

Flicker got to his hands and knees on the canvas. He shoved back all the money Pouncy had bet.

"Save your money," he said, sitting back. "Put in a piece of writing against my cash—if you can write."

"Writing?" echoed Pouncy. What do you mean?"

"A name, Pouncy. A name on a piece of paper."

"What name?" Pouncy asked thickly.

"The name of the man who shot dad this afternoon."

POUNCY rolled his eyes at the men around him. He looked sick.

"You were willing to bet a horse, Pouncy, on that hand of yours," Flicker kept on relentlessly, slit eyed, hard. "Ain't you willing to bet a name on a paper?"

Pouncy shifted uneasily to his knees.

"What's the matter, Pouncy? You afraid if I see the name you'd have to kill me—'keel a keed'? Or are you afraid I might kill you?"

"Damn sheepherdin' brat!" breathed Pouncy.

"Write a name, Pouncy," Flicker commanded, leaning forward. "Write the

name and put it down there. If my cards are better than yours, I get the name. If your cards are better than mine, I don't get it. Are you a gambler, beef-eater? Or are you yella?"

One of the watching men said harshly: "He's darin' you, Squirrel-pouch."

Pouncy's eyes rolled at the big hog-leg gun that Flicker was gripping with both hands. He swept again the men looking down at him, and saw no mercy.

"Bet, Pouncy!" Flicker cried. "Write the killer's name and bet it!"

Somebody shoved a scrap of brown paper sacking and a stub of pencil into Pouncy's hand. Pouncy dropped them, got up heavily, and backed off a step.

"By God!" said Jesse James.

"Which I second," said Fort, but there was no banter in his tone now.

Pouncy's mouth was working in his baggy, yellowed face, trying to speak words, unable to do so. His men moved back from him, withdrawing, scorn in their hard eyes.

Flicker laughed, one grim, meaningful note. He picked up the money he had bet. Left what Pouncy had bet. Spread his cards face up, with a gesture of disdain, displaying his straight flush, ten-spot high. Then he got up and stalked to his horse, hearing again his father's words: "Worse things than killing to do to a man."

He spoke to his pup, got into his saddle, clucked to his horse. And moved, not east, as he had been told, but west.

Somebody ripped Pouncy's five cards from his nerveless hand.

"By God!" Flicker heard Fort sing out. "He had the kid beat—he's got a straight flush, king high!"

And Flicker rode on alone into the western darkness, with the wind in his teeth.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Brings you another matchless novelette of the Legion—"Affair of Honor," by Georges Surdez—the story of a young officer who learned his fighting from textbooks, and then went out to command hard-bitten regulars who had their own ideas about war.

In the same issue—

"Boom Town," by Thomson Burtis, a novelette about a mushroom oil city, and two men who gambled for big stakes; another Bedford-Jones story, "Dan'l Morgan's Stripes," which takes you to the Indian Wars; "The Golden Fleece," a story by Paul Randell Morrison about a man named Sleepy who was wide awake; "Derelict," an off-the-trail story by Jonathan Eldridge and Hugh B. Cave—these and many others will appear in the April

16 MORE PAGES

Adventure 15c

On Sale March 10th

RED SKY AT DAWN

"You do your part and we get the dough."

by Captain William Outerson

THERE was no sound on the sea but the rhythmic thud of oars against the tholes of an open boat. The six men at the oars pulled with a steady stroke, exact and unhurried as the movements of a slow pendulum. At sunset the wind had fallen; they had toiled all night with that tireless, measured swing. Overhead, the gray sky showed small clear spaces where the stars shone through, but the clouds had been heavy up till then and the night dark. Low on the eastern horizon a faint line of crimson marked the coming of day. It spread swiftly, growing brighter until the sky glowed a vivid red and the sea was the color of blood.

The skipper sat on the after thwart and watched the sunrise, holding the tiller and frequently glancing down at the boat's compass, set in gimbals and held in a bracket clamped to the edge of the seat.

"Red sky at morning, sailors take warning," he was thinking. He was alone there, facing the six men at the oars, and his tired eyes passed thoughtfully from one to the other, resting briefly on each as he recalled what he had learned of their characters on board the ship. Physically, they were all good men, accustomed to the exacting labor of the sea but differing widely in type. Young Clifford at the starboard bow oar, Semper on the midship thwart, and Ransome on the seat abaft of that, were nondescript men, neither good nor bad. The remaining three were birds of another feather.

Calgony, the lean, hawk-faced man on the thwart with Ransome, had bushy black eyebrows, a parrot beak, a long lethal jaw, and expressionless eyes that blazed when he was roused. Captain Morton had seen him fighting on the deck of the ship during the passage, and

he knew the strength and ferocity of the man. Bektoff, the man beside Semper, was a heavy-muscled type with a thick nose, hard eyes and pointed ears. He was not as tall or quick as Calgony, but looked stronger. Silber, who shared the thwart with young Clifford, made up in wickedness what he lacked in size. He had large gray eyes that gazed at one with an absent glance, well formed but over-ripe lips, and a straight nose. All of these men, bad and indifferent, knew that the skipper carried thirty thousand dollars in the leather bag containing his log and the ship's papers.

The stern of the boat was decked over from the rudder-post to the after thwart, and the inclosed space served as a locker in which food was kept behind a door fastened with a hasp and staple. In order to open it, the staple had merely to be pulled out. All hands were aware that the skipper's bag was inside the locker.

It was queer, he reflected, how information got spread about on board ship. Within twenty-four hours of their departure from Shanghai, the entire crew had heard that he carried that amount of currency in the ship's safe; and after the order had been given to abandon the sinking ship, these three men—Calgony, Bektoff and Silber—had planned to form part of the crew of his boat. There was no doubt of that in his mind, and it was easy to understand why they had made this arrangement, though up to the present their conduct had been satisfactory. They intended to steal the thirty thousand dollars—and it was his duty to deliver it into the hands of the owners.

Seamen on sailing ships always carried sheath-knives, and these six in the boat must have worn them when they left the ship, but in this red dawning the skipper noticed that the leather sheaths on all of their belts were empty.

He was not deceived by that outward show. Calgony, Bektoff, and Silber might secretly have thrown the other three knives overboard during the previous day or night, when the boat was under sail and all hands except himself slept on the bottom boards; but he was very sure that they had not deprived themselves of their own weapons. In all probability they had hidden the knives under their clothing and would deny possession of them if he asked any questions. The circumstance confirmed his suspicion. There was going to be trouble.

They were over a hundred miles from the coast of California, near the latitude of San Francisco, and at their present rate of speed the skipper expected to make his landfall at dawn of the next day. If a breeze came along they might sight the land sooner, according to the strength of the wind. The men might therefore do violence to him, the skipper surmised, at any time during this day or night, since he was no longer needed to navigate the boat.

He was altogether certain of this. The coast of California extended north and south for approximately six hundred miles; and the least intelligent among them knew that by steering east they would make the land. It was impossible to miss it. That being so, there was no reason why they should delay their attempt to get hold of the money, except that he would have to be killed first. What were they waiting for? They feared his revolver and would delay their attack for a few hours longer, in the hope that he would be overcome by exhaustion and forced to sleep. For two days and nights, since the hour when they abandoned the ship, he had kept himself constantly awake, and there was a limit to his endurance. During the coming night that limit would be reached.

SEARCHING here and there in his mind for some solution to the problem of saving his life and his owners' property, he revived a memory that had almost faded out. One night on board ship, when he had felt unusually sociable, he

had listened while the mate yarned about this man Calgony. A merciless rascal, the mate had called him. He had been in jail more than once and was known to have been guilty of murder, but the police had not been able to produce the evidence that would convict him on a capital charge and were compelled to let him go.

In all men, we are told, there is a kernel of good, and the mate had related with plain amazement a story about Calgony that showed him highly human in the matter of keeping a promise. This depraved scoundrel possessed one excellent virtue—he would keep an agreement to the death.

Of the other two bad men in the boat the skipper knew almost nothing that was good. Bektoff was a monster, a product of the Russian Revolution. He was utterly unscrupulous, treacherously cunning and cruel. During the revolution he and his like had choked better men slowly to death by methods unfit to be mentioned, and he hated all white officers with a torturing venom.

Yet even he had something to his credit. According to the mate, the men liked him because he was a competent seaman, and his manner was always genial, unless something happened to annoy him.

Concerning Silber, the mate knew nothing definite, only that in his own way he was as bad as the other two. But he had earned the admiration of the crew by his uncanny dexterity in the art of throwing a knife. He could drive the point of the blade inside a three-inch circle drawn on a board, at any distance up to twelve paces. This capacity might with certain reservations be counted in his favor, since exceptional skill denotes faithful application.

"That'll do the oars," said the skipper, and the men came to rest.

Drawing the staple from the hasp, he opened the door of the locker and brought out a canvas bag containing ship's bread and a can of corned beef, which he distributed in equal portions. To those who wanted water before eating he gave a half-pint pannikin filled from the breaker nearest him, which was still half full. The other one in the forward part of the boat had not yet been broached.

When the scanty meal had been eaten, and all had received their whack of water, the men lit pipes or cigarettes and smoked in silence. A secret purpose occupied their minds, and small talk did not appeal to them, but after a while the strain of conspiracy began to make them uneasy. Calgony brought them relief when he pointed into the north; and all hands, casting their eyes in that direction, saw ruffled water half a mile off, the sign of approaching wind. Captain Morton waited until the breeze reached them before ordering the oars in and the sail set, and this was smartly done. The men were then allowed to lie down in the bottom of the boat and go to sleep, and the skipper kept watch alone.

The red sky, he thought, might be the herald of approaching storm, and if a heavy sea rose the boat would need an expert hand at the tiller, which he did not pretend to be. In the meantime he had to evolve a plan by which he could save his owners' money and his own life, and to this end, he bent his flagging mental energies. The breeze grew stronger and the sky cleared, and when the sun came out his weather sense and experience told him there was not much fear of heavy weather for the present. Slowly a scheme worked itself out in his mind, and when noon came he had completed a plan, by no means perfect but the best he could do under the circumstances.

Moving his foot, he touched Calgony gently. He stirred but did not awake, and the skipper touched him again more sharply. When Calgony started up, glaring in hard suspicion, Captain Morton beckoned him to rise silently and sit on the thwart at his side. With hostile suspicion and dawning curiosity Calgony

rose without a sound from the side of Ransome and slid on to the thwart beside the skipper, watching him with eyes that had lost their dullness and were keenly alert.

"YOU have good sense, Calgony," the skipper said casually, speaking in an undertone so low that the seaman leaned close to hear it. "You know that if you kill me for the money you'll have murder on your hands; and the other three men in the boat will have to be satisfied, or they'll talk. The only way to keep them quiet, if you don't share the money with them, is to kill them." He paused and studied the face of the man at his side, who nodded.

"Carry on, sir," he said in a voice as low as the skipper's.

"Have you made a solemn agreement with Bektoff and Silber?" the captain inquired.

Calgony stared at him in silence, suspecting what he was leading up to.

"No, sir," he replied at last. "We ain't had the chance to talk about it. Bektoff passed the word to get into your boat an' take care of the money, an' of course I knowed what he meant, though nothin' more was said."

The skipper shrugged.

"If you and Silber and Bektoff get away with the money, you'll have to account for Clifford, Semper, Ransome and myself. Supposing you get rid of me and square the other three, you will have eight or nine thousand dollars as your share, if Bektoff doesn't knife you in the back. Can you trust him and Silber? Bektoff would kill his own father for fifty rubles, and Silber is no better. What would they not do for ten thousand dollars?"

"They can't do nothin' to me," said Calgony. "I know them guys." He spoke with sneering assurance, but the skipper noted a slight hesitation in his words.

"A man can't be on his guard every minute," the skipper argued softly. "And the police will be on your trail, wanting to know what happened to me. Your friends ashore will be scared to hide you, unless you pay them big money. You'll be too hot." He paused. "Listen. I'll make a deal with you. Stand by me, watch and watch, until we make the shore. On the day and the hour when I hand over this money to the owners, you get ten thousand dollars. I'll pay it into your hand, and there will be no strings to it. You will be free to spend it in the open without fear of the police."

Calgony turned with a sardonic smile on his lips.

"Put the ten grand into my hand right now, and I'll do it," he offered. "I'll stand by you, watch and watch, till we make the shore, and I'll see you safe to the owners' office. That's a sworn agreement, and I'll keep it if I live."

The skipper considered swiftly. After all, he was staking everything on Calgony's good faith, and it made no difference whether he gave him the money now or later. According to the mate, this man would keep his promise to the death. He stooped over and opened the door of the locker, drew out his bag and took from it a packet of bills neatly wrapped in white paper, which he handed to Calgony without further words. The seaman carefully opened the end of the parcel, assured himself that it contained a hundred hundred-dollar bills, and concealed it under his jumper.

"All right, sir," he nodded. "I'm your man till the pay-off."

"I'm trusting your word," said the skipper. After a slight hesitation he drew his revolver and handed it butt forward to Calgony, whose eyes brightened as he gripped it. "Don't use it except in self-defense."

He hoped he had done the right thing, but he now felt utterly exhausted, unable to keep his eyes open, so he told Calgony to take the tiller and steer east by north, dropped his head on his arms on top of the locker and fell instantly

into profound sleep. The fair breeze bellied out the sail and drove the boat along; the sky remained clear and the sun was not too hot.

Calgony sat steering with watchful eye, paying only cursory attention to the tiller and directing his whole attention on Bektoff and Silber, huddled in the bottom of the boat. He had told the truth to the skipper when he said there was no definite agreement between himself and these two pals of his; but there had been a clear enough understanding, and he knew what murderous fury his act of betrayal would arouse in them. Therefore he waited in cynical amusement to see what would happen when they woke up and discovered him as master's mate.

Bektoff raised his head first and stared at Calgony in mute surprise, then at the sleeping captain, sprawled on the locker like a dead man. Eager to profit by the opportunity, Bektoff made a gesture toward the door of the locker, meaning that it should be opened and the spoil secured immediately. Glancing behind him at the still unconscious Silber, he pointed at Calgony and then at himself, indicating that they should divide the money equally between them and leave the bag for their partner. The suggestion amused Calgony, who grinned in appreciation but made no move to open the door of the locker. Suspicion, ever awake in Bektoff, flashed into certainty when he saw something bulging Calgony's jumper. He had taken all the money for himself.

Bektoff's hand went down under his belt and came up gripping a knife; he began to move warily toward Calgony, who triumphantly drew the skipper's revolver from under his jumper and pointed it straight at the evil face before him.

THOUGH he intended to kill both of his companions on one pretext or another before they reached the shore, Calgony obeyed the skipper's injunction for the present and did not press the trigger, knowing that the Russian would halt at sight of the gun.

Bektoff was completely puzzled. No inkling had yet entered his mind of a possible agreement between Calgony and the skipper, whom he supposed to be dead. But now, withdrawing his hypnotized gaze from the little round hole in the muzzle of the revolver, he turned it on the captain and noted that he was breathing with the peaceful regularity of sleep.

Familiar in himself with every degree of treachery, his outraged mind at once leapt to the truth of the situation—Calgony had sold out to the skipper. Hate and fury tortured him, but he did not show it. His self-control enabled him to assume his customary expression of genial good nature, and he grinned as if to congratulate the other on his triumph; but Calgony was not deceived.

"I'll get him before we hit the beach," Bektoff was thinking.

Calgony lighted a cigarette and let it hang from the edge of his lip while his eyes flicked between the compass, Bektoff and Silber. He wondered what the little man would do, and again doubt struck at his vitals as he pictured Silber's ungodly skill in throwing the knife. It sped like a silver streak through the air and pierced whatever he aimed it at. Calgony had never once seen it miss its mark. Regret for his own foolish hesitation began to worry him, and he cursed himself for sparing Bektoff. The knife in his hand would have satisfied the skipper that he had acted in self-defense, if he had shot him then; and now he would have the pair of them against him: Bektoff with the demon's heart and Silber with the flying knife. They might be too many for him; and he sat slumped forward on the thwart, looking for a way out of his dilemma. It came to him in a few minutes—a sweet little trick that pleased him.

Moving with utmost caution to avoid

waking the skipper, he rose silently from the thwart, keeping careful hold of the end of the tiller, and stretched forth his foot to deliver a sharp kick against the heel of Bektoff, who sat up, his small eyes glittering.

"Why don't you do your job?" Calgony muttered. "Are you leavin' it all for me to do?"

"What job?" asked Bektoff in angry bewilderment. "What you talking about?"

"Get the skipper," Calgony answered. "Put the knife into him. Do it quiet, an' we'll dump him silent over the side. Say he rolled overboard in his sleep."

Hate blazed in Bektoff's eyes.

"Why don't you give 'im the works yourself?" he sneered.

"I got an agreement with him," Calgony explained. "I can't touch him, but you can. I got him to turn in, didn't I? That's my part of the play. You do your part."

"Why'd you pull your gat on me for?" Bektoff inquired with less certainty.

"Why'd you come at me with your knife?" Calgony retorted. "I didn't want to die. I had everything ready for you, an' you fumbled it. You thought I'd sold out to the skipper. Don't you never trust nobody? Do your job now, before he wakes up." He slid back to the thwart beside the sleeping skipper and sat attending to his steering, casting an occasional glance at Bektoff, who surveyed him with a concentrated stare and showed no intention of rising.

A few seconds was all he needed.

He was asking himself some very puzzling questions: Why had Calgony not got rid of the skipper himself, when he had the best of chances with all hands sound asleep? He wanted to keep his own hands clean and bump the skipper off, so as he could dangle the noose over the fall guy's head any time he liked.

But, as Bektoff considered the situa-

tion, he began to form the opinion that Calgony might now be acting in good faith. He surely had a crazy habit of keeping his promises, even against his own advantage; and refusing to kill the skipper because he had an agreement with him was just the sort of thing he would do. The damn fool! And if Calgony had wanted to get rid of him, why didn't he shoot that first time when he had the gun in his hand, and Bektoff was going after him with a knife? He could have done it in self-defense and got away with it.

This argument finally convinced Bektoff. His hand dipped under his jumper, and he rose with the knife held point outward, his thumb lying along the haft toward the blade, which was keen and polished. Crouching forward, he stepped soundlessly over a thwart on his way to slay the defenseless captain. When he flexed back his arm to give force to the fatal blow, Calgony drew the skipper's gun and shot Bektoff through the heart.

The skipper sprang up, and the men rose in startled confusion.

"I had to do it, sir," said Calgony. "He pulled a knife on me."

THE skipper looked down at the dead man and surveyed his gross bulk in silence. By rights, he reflected inconsequently, Calgony ought to be rewarded for ridding he world of Bektoff, even though he was little better than the man he had killed. There seemed to be no doubt that he had fired the shot to protect himself from the bite of that gleaming long blade, still loosely held in the grasp of the closed hand.

Why he had shot him, however, was a question of small importance, if he was finally dead—and there seemed no room for uncertainty on that point. There were certain formalities to be observed in cases of this kind, and everybody was questioned. Nothing was learned about the actual shooting from the three nondescripts, who had seen nothing but Calgony with a smoking revolver in his hand, and Bektoff lying with his head on the gunwale. Silber offered no evidence.

"How did it happen?" the skipper inquired of Calgony.

"He wanted to open the door of the locker, sir," Calgony replied with sardonic righteousness. "I warned him to keep away, but he came at me with his knife, not knowin' I had your gat under my shirt, so I gave him the works."

"I see," said the skipper, nodding briefly. "In that case you were justified in shooting him. I'll enter it in the log that he was killed for mutinous conduct. That clears you of all blame."

They put the body of Bektoff into the sea with the knife still in his hand, but Semper reached outboard and snatched it away, thrusting it into his sheath.

"What do you want with that?" the skipper demanded sharply.

"He took mine, sir, an' threw it over the side." Semper answered.

After a pause the skipper nodded permission to keep the knife, and dismissed the matter from his mind, feeling certain that Semper, Clifford and Ransome were now harmless, having learned that Calgony was loyal to him.

Silber was the only other man who gave him any concern. What would he do? That little scoundrel knew more than he had told, though his face was a stony mask that revealed nothing.

Silber was entirely unaffected by Bektoff's death, which accused him no slightest regret, but Calgony's betrayal had cost him ten thousand dollars, and that was a different matter. And besides, he had been awake when Calgony played the trick that brought Bektoff to his death; and Silber would not be caught in any such snare laid for himself.

At four o'clock the skipper relieved Calgony at the tiller and asked for his revolver, which the seaman seemed unwilling to give up.

"He's layin' for me, sir," he objected.

"Yes, I know," the skipper agreed. "But he'll do nothing before witnesses —and I can shoot pretty straight myself."

Calgony handed over the gun, watching Silber as he did so. The little man was sitting on a forward thwart, looking off to the north and apparently deep in his own reflections, but this pose did not deceive Calgony, who knew that Silber was aware of every movement he made. During the coming night, Calgony told himself, he must be constantly alert, for Silber would seize the first chance that presented itself. A few seconds was all the time he needed to throw his knife into the heart of a man, and with this thought a shadow of fear again passed across Calgony. He would have to watch him every second. The three-quarter moon would be high and bright until about two in the morning.

At five o'clock the skipper took food from the locker and told the men to eat and drink as much as they wanted, for they would be in San Francisco some time on the following day. All hands ate and drank plenty; and when they had finished, the three nondescripts lit their pipes and sat back against the gunwales, looking pleased and carefree. They had nothing on their minds and plenty in their stomachs, and plots and counterplots were not for the likes of them. The other three were not so placid, though their faces showed little of strain. Captain Morton looked as if he had placed a small bet and was wondering whether he would win or lose. Calgony's hawk face seemed carved in rock, and there was no light in his eyes, but a certain alertness marked his pose. By the look of Silber, one might have thought that he slept with open eyes—but he was too intent to be asleep.

SILBER lay down in the bottom of the boat at nine o'clock, following the lead of Clifford, Semper and Ransome. He reclined on his back with his right hand, under his jumper, grasping Clifford's knife, which he had appropriated during their first night adrift. His plan was simple. If he got Calgony with the first throw, and he knew that he would, he would use his own knife on the captain when he sat up to take the tiller. Supposing that Calgony did not flop down and wake the skipper, Silber thought he might steal aft over the thwarts and take the gun from the dead man's hand.

But after careful consideration of this procedure he discarded it as being too risky. The skipper was a wise guy and might be lying awake with his eyes closed, waiting for something like that to happen. When he had finished with these two, the other three guys would be easy to handle. A grand apiece would keep them quiet.

He lay there watching Calgony, a brightly illumined figure in the clear moonlight, and a splendid target. If he would only turn his eyes away for two or three seconds!

But Calgony kept him under his fixed gaze, hoping he would make a movement and provide the opportunity for a shot in self-defense. This watchful waiting on the edge of death was beginning to try Calgony's nerves, and he craved to end it. The present was a favorable time, for the moonlight would shine on Silber's face if he sat up. But Silber remained motionless and silent, and Calgony thought of the trick he had played Bektoff.

Silber saw him glance briefly aside at the sleeping captain, then hold up the hand with the revolver and beckon. Silber knew what treachery he intended, and that he would not shoot unless he could offer proof of self-defense, so he sat up with empty hands in plain view on the thwart in front of him. Calgony lowered the gun, believing that his ruse was proving successful again, and signed to Silber to come aft and stab the skipper in the heart. Silber nodded in com-

plete understanding and rose slowly to his knees. Just then, the skipper stirred in his sleep alarming Calgony, who turned to look at him, thinking extreme caution no longer necessary. Silber's hand went down under his jumper and came up over his shoulder, pinching the point of the knife between finger and thumb.

It moved backward, then forward with the unhurried speed of the expert, and sped from his grip, flashing in the moonlight as it darted toward Calgony. He turned and saw it, tried to raise the gun but was too late. Jerking convulsively as the blade buried itself in his heart, he settled back in his seat. Silber lay down, holding the other knife under his jumper in readiness for the skipper.

Captain Morton awoke and lay still, opening his eyes, which were hidden from Silber, to observe Calgony sitting with his head sunk forward on his chest, his nerveless hand resting inert on the tiller. The gun! Where was the gun? If Silber had it, the skipper's hour had come. Sitting up with surprising speed, he darted his arm across Calgony's body, found hand and gun resting on the edge of the thwart, and turned to see a deadly silver streak flashing toward him. Already in poignant anticipation he could feel the flung knife piercing him; but mind and muscle were finely co-ordinated, and his left hand moved swiftly, jerking Calgony's precariously balanced body so that it toppled sidewise in front of him, serving as a shield, and the blade sank into unheeding flesh. Raising his revolver, the skipper fired unhurriedly, and the bullet struck Silber in the forehead. For an instant the curtains withdrew from the little man's eyes and a wild light flashed within them; then he dropped dead in the bottom of the boat. The three nondescripts started up in alarm, saw the skipper sitting with the smoking gun in his hand, and Calgony slumped across him. The man with one good quality had kept his agreement to death and beyond.

"What happened, sir?" the startled three inquired. The skipper told them.

Dawn came and lighted up the boat.

The skipper had recovered the money given to Calgony, who had no use for it now. Straight ahead, ranges of hills stood in clear silhouette against the flaming eastern sky; and the skipper sat at the tiller. He expected to reach San Francisco in the afternoon of that day. When he handed the bag intact to the owners, his responsibility would be ended. There was peace in the heart of Captain Morton.

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THE CAMP-FIRE

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AT THIS Camp-Fire we'll pile the logs higher and send a stronger firelight out over the ranks of comrades squatting on their hunkers. And we'll pass from hand to hand for all to see a bottle left on El Volcan peak (Mt. Chirique) in Panama in 1901.

Briefly we'll review the recent history of that venerable bottle.

It begins in *Ask Adventure,* and it begins with a comrade somewhere among us now who has full right to remark that he'll be darned. This comrade made an inquiry about settling on the Galapagos Islands.

Seymour Pond replied, recommending that he let those lava heads of hell alone and consider instead the El Volcan region where the highlands climb out of the tropics into the temperate zone.

And now another comrade spoke up. He is V. V. Sessions of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He gave us an intensely interesting account of the climbing of El Volcan itself in 1910. Believing that no man had ever gone to the top of the 8,000 foot peak, he and three other men set out. For several days they hacked their way through jungles unmarked by trails or habitations to reach its slope. Only he and one other were able to scale precipitous walls and drag themselves to the top. And when they got there did they stare out like Balboa over jungle and sea? No, they stared at a bottle.

The bottle contained a note written by a naturalist named Brown, of Boston, in 1901.

Later Mr. Sessions, wanting to get in touch with Brown, heard that he had been killed by Yaqui Indians while on a lone expedition in Mexico.

In Camp-Fire I asked that any surviving relatives or friends of Brown tell us about him and let us give him his due and a better known place on the rolls of adventurers.

And a letter came saying that Brown wasn't dead, but still on the go—he'd been heard of indirectly only some months ago as he set off on another trip.

And now we hear from Brown, who

wrote direct from Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico, to Mr. Sessions, who sends the letter to us. W. W. Brown now has the answer to what he often wondered —would he ever hear from that bottle he left on El Volcan thirty-six years ago?

Here is Mr. Brown's letter:

I am the man who placed the pickle bottle on the 'Volcano de Chirique' in 1901. I climbed the peak twice, alone, my Indians refusing to follow me, evidently for superstitious reasons. On my first climb, when I got to the top, all I could see below was a blanket of snow white clouds extending as far as the eye could reach and pierced here and there by distant peaks, for it was in the rainy season when the clouds hang low. On my second ascent the country below was blanketed as before, but not so densely, and through openings in the clouds, as I sat perched on the highest rock of the peak smoking my pipe, I got now and then momentary views of the distant blue waters of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. My object in visiting the Volcano de Chirique was to explore the great reaches of forests both on the Pacific and Atlantic slopes for rare and unknown species of birds, mammals and reptiles. My expedition was made up chiefly of Indians, and myself, and we stayed up there six weeks and camped in the crater which you so well describe as very level. At the time we were there, it was covered with long grass, out of which my Indians constructed a camp which proved absolutely waterproof, although it rained every afternoon during our stay. Inside they constructed a bed out of the limbs of trees about two feet from the ground, and covered it with about a foot of dried grass, which made a good mattress and was very comfortable. One night, I don't know how long I had slept, I was awakened, for my Indians were all sitting up, talking in low tones and listening to a strange, weird cry from the forest. On my asking what it was, one answered, 'el espirito de huacal'—the spirit of the Indian graves is calling. Next morning they asked me for permission to hunt for the graves where the spirit was calling and hurriedly disappeared in the forest, hardly stopping to eat anything and remained away all day, not returning until it began to get dark. On my asking if they had been successful in their search for the graves, they answered 'no'. The reason they were so interested and anxious to find the Indian graves was on account of the gold images in the form of beetles, alligators, hummingbirds and other animals, which the aborigines were in the habit of burying with their dead. In the grass in various parts of the crater were heaps of bleached bones of various species of animals that had been pulled down by carnivora, probably Mountain Lions or Jaguars. We remained up there over six weeks, when we returned to Boquete, camping, hunting and collecting at many localities down the slope. The trip yielded a fine collection of the birds and mammals of the Volcan, many of them new to science. A strange bird which I collected at the base of the Volcano Peak was unknown and a new genus had to be coined for it and is now known as Thryochilusbrowrie. When I was there, there was no trail from Boquete to the Volcan, and we had to cut our way through the jungle, up the slope to the edge of the crater, and then down to the bottom. We then crossed the crater, which was very level and covered with long grass, and oval in shape and about two hundred feet deep. We then came to a slope covered with low stunted trees, whose limbs and trunks were thickly covered with moss and lichens, for it was in the middle of the rainy season and everything was soaked. In making our camp fires we had to use plenty of kerosene, in fact, even then, it was difficult —so wet was the ground and wood. Just below the peak, in an open place, I discovered a species of berry resembling a huckleberry, which was very welcome up there, and, after that, was a favorite locality for my hunters; in fact, about every trip zoological or botanical ended in the 'huckleberry patch.' Your letter and article in the October number of *Adventure* giving your account of the ascent of the Volcano of Chirique and the finding of the pickle bottle containing the record of my ascent was indeed a most pleasant surprise to me, for I had long ago given up all hope of ever hearing from it, after all these years, for I placed it on the summit thirty-six years ago. Boquete, as you and Mr. Pond write, is a delightful place to settle, having a salubrious climate, sublime scenery, and is a wonderful coffee country. When I was there, quite a colony of planters were in Boquete. Did you meet Don Carlos Wilson? He had a cattle ranch at Divala. He used to visit David and Boquete quite often. Then there was Watson, who ran a store, and Thomas, who owned a fine coffee plantation, and Dr. Kant, who owned a store, and Denham and Midberry, who owned plantations back from Boquete. New Caledonia is a name new to me. Mr. Pond speaks of making the trip in auto from David to El Volcan in four hours. He probably meant from David to Boquete—which

may now be called El Volcan. It took me a day with saddle horse and six pack mules, and we arrived then late at night. We passed through La Concepcion. Well, it is about time I ended my story. My zoological explorations in Panama completed, I decided to return to New York via the Bocas del Toro trail, which leads from Boquete passes over the divide, and down the Atlantic slope, through a great continuous forest to Bocas del Toro, where we arrived after a long, arduous trip, and where I bid my Indian followers a regretful farewell—caught a Hamburg-American Steamer for New York, and soon was far at sea. (Finis.) Very truly yours, (Signed) W. W. Brown."

And Mr. Sessions comments thus:

The above writes finis to the episode of the pickle bottle on Mt. Chirique, and I have enjoyed my exchange of letters with you immensely.

I am really sorry that our correspondence has come to a close, as it brought back to mind many pleasant recollections. Some day something else may come up in Camp-Fire, with which I am familiar, and, if and when it does, I certainly will not hesitate to express myself.

WITH the H. Bedford-Jones story we are fortunate to have the map made at the time by British military engineers. This was given us by the artist, I. B. Hazelton, himself a student of American history and particularly a devotee of Custer's campaigns.

The story and others to follow come out of a recent talk with H. Bedford-Jones. The talk was about another type of stories, and at its conclusion I mentioned that I had been sitting up late over a biography of Daniel Boone. (Now there's a man to read about!) At any hint of history H. Bedford-Jones is like a bird dog going up the wind. He reads as tremendously as he writes, and has the aid of an exceptional memory, and his favorite reading is history. Soon history was repeating itself on the tablecloth, with cutlery for troops, dishes for stockades or ships, and everything on the table being moved around until it wound up with Bedford-Jones drinking my cup of coffee.

These stories are done with a different approach. Their heroes are the fighting men of the front or rear ranks, whose names do not appear in the history books but who did the actual fighting and suffered the greatest hardships and were only conspicuous when the bullets were flying—you might call them the forgotten men of battles. No attempt will be made in the stories to follow any chronological order or cover all the conspicuously great moments of American history, but they will be chosen as typical and varied dramas of three centuries, and so far as possible their heroes will be typical of the men engaged and the action will be seen as they saw it.

This lays down a difficult task, and very few writers indeed could do it. The first story appears in this issue.

WHEN you read Barry Scobee's "The Last Shot" in this issue, you'll feel—I hope—that this fellow knows a bit about the West, of which he writes. He comes back to our pages after a long absence.

Mr. Scobee says:

One of the first sights I ever saw was a long string of covered wagons rolling west with "Aimin' fer Kansas" and such like painted on their sides. My mother said, "That's the way your uncle went to the Oklahoma Strip." When I got big enough I eased out to Kansas on the rods, between school terms. Then later to Oklahoma, when people were still living in sod houses. I slept in a sod house part of one summer. Then later to Texas. And Washington state. On west to the Philippines. Army life. News reporting. Military reporting on the Mexican Border in Villa's heydey. Now I've lived in a little West Texas mountain cowtown for a long time, where my old neighbors like to whittle in the shade and tell how they got here ahead of wire fences, back in the days of warfare over waterholes, and warfare between cattlemen and sheep men, and how men came west with a bunch of horses and started cow outfits! Those last words have a trick meaning. They meant gun fights in the old days, and hangings for cattle thieves, or a running start to success. The West has sort of wrapped itself around me, all else being of little consequence compared to that. I've often divided my time between

fiction writing and news writing. Am now. Three days a week I'm on the road for a Texas morning paper and covering half a dozen of these big counties West of the Pecos, spending days and nights in towns on the great Bankhead Highway, route to golden California; or on the Rio Grande, or on remote ranches talking to grizzled old cowmen about drouth and horses and roundups, listening to their tales of long ago, and their problems today; studying characters, young as well as old, which these environments have moulded. It's a great beat for a reporter! And for a scribbler of western stuff. Flicker McElroy and his dog and his hoss Bushy, in a story in this *Adventure*, stepped out of some of these tales. . . . Autobiographical data, Mr. Editor? Well, I was born. Learned to read and write. Grew up to five feet eight and stopped. Learned the printer's trade somehow. Got married, long ago. Still am. Have written many a yarn for *Adventure*. It's a great old magazine. And this is a great old world. Adios.

A NEW member of our Writer's Brigade is Charles W. Tyler of Glendale, California, who joins us with his story "Baldy Sours and the Human Race." He is surely the least serious fellow we have met in a long time, though his account of himself is given with a fairly straight face.

I took root on a farm in North Hinsdale, N. H. My first outside job was hoeing and worming tobacco, at one dollar for ten hours. Since then I have been a Western Union "trotter" in Boston, a tin knocker, steam fitter, architectural draftsman, fisherman, engine wiper, telegrapher, railroad fireman and Tin Can Tourist.

I am married, and we have jogged along in double harness for twenty years. In 1913 a resolute and daring editor bought a railroad story, and I promptly called his bluff and became a fiction writer, and was he disgusted. He wrote me at some length, suggesting that if I'd study up on the King's English and punctuation and spelling and so on, it would, perhaps, make for greater mutual affection, because he'd be darned if he had either the time or the inclination to horse around a half a day with every manuscript that came his way from a half-baked railroad tallowpot. Thus a certain editor, working under Bob Davis, whisked me into the Paradise known as "Squirrel's Delight."

Strangers in the neighborhood say: "What does that man over there do? We often see him sitting out behind the barn, holding his head in his hands." And the answer is: "Him? Oh, he don't do anything. He writes pieces."

My wife and I like to prowl around the desert, and spread our bed under the stars in an empty street where somebody has lived, long ago. There's Bodie and Aurora and Bullfrog and Rhyolite and Calico. In Rhyolite, we have slept beside the house built solely of whiskey bottles. In Aurora beside the barn where an old hearse is still housed. And then we find so many other ghostly towns —some, with only cellar holes; others with a few tottering buildings. Copper City, Coolgardie, Ballarat, Skidoo.

The late John Lane, known far and wide as the King of Calico, and his wife were friends whom we often visited. Calico began to fade in the '90s but it once had a population of 3500. For years John Lane and his wife were the only inhabitants. The last time I was there, Mrs. Lane was still living in a brown dobe house on the single street.

Winter finds us in the back country. Death Valley (now with dude accommodations) the Funeral Mountains, the Panamints; in Nevada, it's the Big Smoky, the Little Smoky, the Pintwater, among others, and the Gila, of Arizona, and the Mohave and Colorado deserts in California. In these deserts we have met some of the finest people we know. Wise men and philosophers, every one. And in these places, also, "Me and Baldy Sours and Texas Joe" find the background for some of the damnedest lies you ever heard.

CAPTAIN William Outerson, whose story "Red Sky at Dawn" is in this issue, seems to be one of those fellows who lives a lot of life and doesn't talk much about it. Of himself, he says, too briefly:

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, April 21, 1875; went to sea in the fourmasted barque *Kelburn* in October, 1889, and knocked about on land and sea during the next seven years. Entered Marietta Academy in 1896, joined the United States Navy for seven months during the war with Spain, returned and graduated from Marietta College in 1902. Reporter on Marietta papers and editor of the *Daily Journal* of that town. Went to Alaska, reported for a Seattle paper, *Post-Intelligencer*, sailed for Manila and entered the Philippine Civil Service, resigned and went treasure hunting in Goldfield, Nevada, then to New

York and Edinburgh, where he studied for one year at the university, married, wrote a novel and in April, 1915, received a commission in the Black Watch. Was sent to India and received a staff appointment in the Ordnance Department, visited Rangoon and Mandalay, resigned with the rank of captain in July, 1920. Returning to Edinburgh, he sailed with his wife and family for California. Has been employed as reader and writer in the motion picture studios in Hollywood.

ANY doubts we had about reviving the old Lost Trails department were dropped overboard when we got this letter from Barrett Philip, of Washington, D. C. Our first request came from T. Glenn Harrison of St. Paul, Minnesota. He had lost track of Mr. Philip in New York City nineteen years ago. Mr. Philip writes us:

In Camp-Fire of the January issue, you ask members of the *Adventure* family whether they would desire a resumption of the "Lost Trails" column. The first item which you stated you had on your desk, happens to refer to me. I have already sent a letter by airmail to Mr. T. Glenn Harrison. I wish to express my appreciation of the opportunity of renewing my friendship with Mr. Harrison through your magazine.

Here is the way Lost Trails stands at present. Several more queries for old comrades have arrived too late for listing this time. With our next issue Lost Trails will move out of Camp-Fire and become a separate department.

Lost Trails

Notices will be printed for three issues unless we hear from readers that they have filled their purpose. We shall print only requests that seem to us genuine efforts to re-establish old friendships.

Roy S. Tinney, Chatham, New Jersey, wants to hear from "Lone Eagle," formerly of Eagle Bar Ranch, Winnett, Montana, and any other riflemen who shot at the National Proving Station, Tenafly, New Jersey, in 1919 and 1920.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

Leslie A. Hall, 808 Hirst Ave., Penfield, Upper Darby, Pa., wants to hear from A. (Scotty) Fullerton, armorer, and "Hank" O'Green, signalman, on U. S. S. Michigan, 1912-14, and in the landing party at Vera Cruz, 1914. (Comrade Hall Comments: In 1919 Scotty put in a Lost Trails for me. I was in West Africa, but a friend in Washington spotted it. Scotty wrote that after being released from a German prison camp, he had a construction job in Canada, and wanted me to go on a prospecting trip to Panama. I wrote that I was married and my prospecting days were over, and the son of a gun must have been so disgusted he never answered. Scotty was probably the handiest man in the fleet in the old days.)

John M. Brinson, 1180 Hale St., Beaumont, Texas, wants to hear from any of the "black gang," U. S. S. Arizona, April, 1917-July, 1919.

Charles H. Leveridge, 502 Wiggins St., Greenport, Long Island, wants word of Joe Howells, formerly of Carstairs, Alberta, Canada, and Robert McLennan, last seen in Vancouver on way up country to look for Lost Lake.

J. Russell Leland, 2084 Eastburn Ave., Philadelphia, Pa., wants to hear from fellow members of the crew of the submarine O-12 in 1922.

Nils Lindstrom, 1831 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, wants word of Joseph (Texas Joe) Barton, first mate of schooner Albert H. Willis at Eastport, Maine, in 1932.

ANENT a name known for cool nerve in hot places, comes this letter from Comrade — and contributor — L. G. Blochman:

Just in case Didier Masson didn't see Francis Rotch's letter in Camp-Fire, here's a bulletin on that famous war-time (and pre-war) flier.

I ran into Didier Masson at Belize as long as five years ago, when I was down in the Caribbean, writing that series of banana plantation yarns for *Adventure*. We put in a memorable day at the old Palace Bar (which has since been washed out to sea or half-way up the river to El Cayo; I forget which), taking the waters with a gang of rum-fleet skippers then working out of Belize, and talking about the first time I had ever seen him: at the

Dominguez Field aviation meet at Los Angeles in 1910. Those were the days when pilots were called birdmen, and Didier Masson was storming the U. S. with Louis Paulhan and Georges Latham in a Blériot monoplane, a Farman biplane that set the world's altitude record at 4,000 feet, and a Voisin that looked like a honeycomb that someone had sat on.

Didier Masson's first love may have mellowed a bit, but he hasn't deserted it. In British Honduras he was (and I suppose still is) Belize manager for Pan-American Airways. He's French Consul, too, but that's not much bother since he's the only Frenchman in Belize.

JACK ALLMAN has sent a few copies of his Matanuska Valley Pioneer. Jack is an Alaskan who came to New York a few years ago and wrote stories of the north, and good ones too. But except for the World War, he had spent all of his life in Alaska, and he missed it. Jack Allman is a powerful fellow who had prospected and mined and trapped and run mail by dog teams. Steam heat didn't take with him, all this section is staked out and settled up, and the moose hunting is way below zero. So he went back and started a newspaper.

It was mimeographed at first but now he has a printing press. He can't find out how old it is. It was in Anchorage thirty years ago and had been in Skagway before that. Jim Virdin got it at Ketchikan when a loser at cards put up the press and lost it too. The winner scratched his head for years wondering what to do with the press until Jack came along and bought it.

With the first issue Jack Allman found himself short of certain letters in his regular 8 point Roman font, and so he quoted this apology from an early newspaper of the West:

"Iph our paper loocques phunny, please excuse it. Our outphit arrived without any ephphs and cays among the type phonts, making it diphphicult to spell out the words, but iph the p, h, q, u and e letters hold out, we will macque them phill the bill."

Jack Allman didn't point out what he was short of, but I noticed a couple of places where he called his paper the VALLFY PIONFFR.

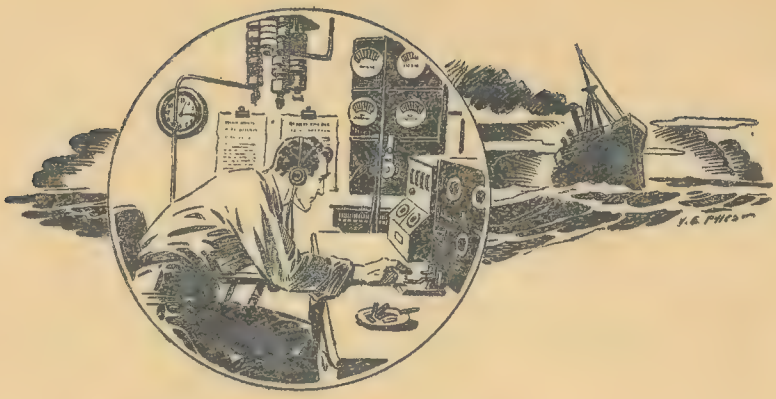
He tells a first rate yarn about Sourdough Sam, a tall straight veteran of seventy with white hair curling over his collar. Sam and his old dog Bum left Matanuska Valley in early spring a month before the colonization plan was broached. The valley then had a few families and two miles of old gravel road. Sam went prospecting in the Chickaloon hills and came back late in September. He was coming along an old Indian trail near Cottonwood Lake when he suddenly was on a fine highway that had no business there, and he heard a honk and a big sedan whizzed by. Sam and Bum looked at each other. They walked past a caterpillar tractor clearing land, then a well rig driving for water, and walked right into a seven room house on the exact spot where Sam had killed a moose the year before. Sam walked on past buildings and working crews until he found a store he knew, and bought a pint of whisky and sat sucking at it. He said nothing. The storekeeper saw his puzzled face and shaking head, and knew what was on Sam's mind but he also said nothing. Sourdough Sam was well down in the pint before he spoke up: "Say, Phil, what in hell's been going on around here anyway?"

"Going on?" said Phil. "Why, nothing much. Valley's grown, though, since you left here ten years ago, Sam."

"TEN YEARS!" shouted Sam, and he jumped up and went out to see if he could find his old cabin.

The Matanuska Valley Pioneer is a good job and a good picture of a new kind of community, and you can write Jack Allman, Publisher-Editor, Palmer, Alaska, if you are interested in it.

H. B.



Ask Adventure

Information

you can't get elsewhere

THE history of Louisiana ownership is a kind of jig-saw puzzle.

Request:—Were Calcasieu and adjoining parishes a part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803? Some writers state that this section was not a part of the purchase, but was annexed by the United States during the "West Florida Rebellion" in 1810. Other writers maintain that this section remained Spanish Territory until acquired from Spain in 1819. However, the treaty was not signed by Spain until 1821.

—R. Erskine Kerr, Lake Charles, La.

Reply by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—The Calcasieu Parish was ceded to the United States, I am quite sure, with the Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon Bonaparte. The Florida difficulties, harking back through Spanish, British, Spanish and American occupations, began with explorations. And they extended no farther west than the Mississippi after the Napoleon grant, when Napoleon's commissioners (spies) ascertained that there were "30,000 prime riflemen" awaiting action impatiently in Kentucky.

There is some uncertainty, you indicate, as regards the Sabine territory—de facto occupation and treaty consideration. This was due to the Jean LaFitte-Barataria piracies, which lasted into 1820 or so. I think that the Spanish were at Galveston till the Texas revolution. That gave them command of the Sabine river. And no matter what the agreement of a treaty, the Spanish troops kept hold till actually ousted—and I don't think the Louisiana Purchase was recognized as regards the Sabine territory until the War with Mexico settled this. Though just when the Mexican successors of Spain actually gave up the Sabine, I don't know.

You can obtain from U. S. Geological Survey and Supt. of Public Documents, both Washington, D. C., maps, reports, and accounts, covering these things. You can probably, in land titles in your county clerk's office, find dates to show when transfers were under United States, instead of Spanish or Mexican occupation. The maps show the agreements—not what was done.

The questions arise as indicated, out of the reluctance with which Spanish authorities yielded forts, lands, prestige, grafts of various kinds, until thrust out. Thus though Spain had ceded the east bank of the Mississippi, the Natchez and other occupants had to be kicked out, more or less energetically, long after treaties were signed. This led to the favors of LaFitte, Bowie, the Creoles, the snorty assaults on Federal appointees in N'Orleans.

The historical documents available from the Supt. of Public Documents, Washington, D. C., and the long and admirable list of histories about Louisiana from the Acadian colonization, N'Orleans settlement, etc., offer more than a ton of related publications—permitting research of a thousand fascinating kinds.

ON an Archery range, the idea is to keep the arrows flying.

Request:—We have a building that is seventy-five feet long, in which we are thinking of putting an Archery range. We should like to know if this building is long enough for that purpose, and if so, what equipment we would need in the line of bows, arrows, targets, etc. Where can they be obtained, and what is the approximate cost?

—Geo. A. Roberts, Kearney, Nebr.

Reply by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—For prices you might write to L. E. Stemmler Co., Queens Village, Long Island, New York, or to Archery Sales and Service, 439 Wabash Ave., Chicago.

You don't say how much width you have. You can easily have about a dozen to two dozen bows and about five hundred arrows if you expect to make a success of it. You cannot have too many arrows, as the big idea in a commercial range, as I know from experience having run more than one, is to keep them shooting.

You ought to have at least eighteen assorted bows, and a half dozen each of armguards and finger tips.

You need not waste money on the expensive circular targets, but build a backstop of baled straw braced by plank framework.

You can figure on about one person shooting at one time to five foot frontage. Closer than that is apt to result in someone's getting tangled up or bumped.

By the way, why don't you put in a crossbow range? The stuff is a far better money-maker, and requires less supervision and less breakage.

BUG collecting is no quick way to get rich.

Request:—Can you tell me if there are any insects of commercial value in Central America or the Philippines? If so, what would some of the possible markets be or sources of information as to such markets? Would it, in your opinion, be possible to make a paying venture out of the collection of such insects, presupposing some knowledge of entomology?

—Blake Cockrum, Austin, Tex.

Reply by Dr. S. W. Frost:—The business of collecting and selling insects is not so profitable. The average insect sells for two or three cents apiece, when sold to museums or to other collectors. When insects are reared from known plants, such as leaf-miners or stem-borers, and are properly labelled, they might bring ten cents apiece. Leaf-hoppers, for instance, gathered from their host plants are of more value than miscellaneous insects taken at random. You probably know that insects to be of value to other collectors must bear the date and locality where they were collected.

Some of the larger and more showy insects may bring as high as $1.00 or $1.50. The brilliant blue morphos, the large rhinoceros beetles, etc., have a value.

I think the best plan is to write one or two of the larger biological supply houses and tell them the countries you plan to visit and ask what they would like to get. To fill orders in this way is much more valuable than to collect and hope to dispose of your material.

IF the mosquitoes are bad, try bats.

Request:—Some time ago I read an account of the elimination of mosquitoes by the introduction of bats and concentrating them in special nesting places. Seeing some twenty of these animals flying around my house lately, the idea came to me that something of the sort might be successful here. Could you advise me what sort of nesting place (not too unsightly) I could put up in my garden and how the bats could be attracted to it and their numbers increased and to what extent? If in large numbers they would probably be more unpleasant in and out of the house than the mosquitoes. I presume that bats breed and remain in this part of Italy (near Genoa) all the year round?

—George Marshall,
Tornaveen, Rapallo, Italy.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—It is a fact that wherever there are bats the mosquitoes will not be so bothersome as they would be without the bats.

Bats like a warm dark place such as a vacated attic (without windows), or barn or out-building. If you could spare part of your attic or if you have an old building in your garden, I believe the bats would be attracted by enclosing a portion of such place to shut out the light. For entrance they prefer a vertical aperture a foot or two high by two or three inches wide. Attics are best because they are warm in summer. In winter, of course, these animals hibernate in northern latitudes. I don't know how much of a winter you have down in Tornaveen.

Bats often make themselves at home under the big eaves of an overhanging roof, or behind open window shutters, or, in fact, most

anywhere that they can find a refuge from the sun during the day. They make no nest, but carry their young with them wherever they go. If the sun catches them out after insects they may not return to their regular nesting place but seek out the first dark cranny as a hideout till dusk. These creatures are most active during the hour between sunset and dark, and during the zero hour just before dawn. They sleep about twenty hours a day. Bats do not migrate. You are correct in your belief that they breed and remain in your part of Italy the year around. There is no fear of your bats increasing to objectionable abundance. In the first place they are obscure, secretive creatures; you will hardly know they are around. In the second place they do not multiply rapidly as their diet is limited to aerial insects.

If you have no buildings or attic available, I think you might be able to encourage these animals with a false board wall fastened three or four inches away from, and parallel to, another wall (a high garden wall, or the wall of a building, etc.), covered at the top to exclude rain and light; leave one or both ends open to serve as an entrance. Incidentally, I understand bats are very fond of thatched roofs.

OLD songs that men have sung.

Request:—Can anyone give me the words of a song called "Other Men's Clover"? I heard it about twelve years ago while an A.B. on one of the Panama Pacific ships.

—P. A. S., ———, Texas.

SPECIFIC questions about our Marines.

Request:—Is the examination for a N. C. O. a written one? Do the Marines have a monthly magazine?

I would like to know if there are any Horse Marines left and, if so, where are they stationed? Are most of the Marine officers taken from the ranks? Is there any way that a boy of seventeen may enter the Marines if his parents are willing to let him? I would also like to know what the pay of a N. C. O. is. I would like to know how many inoculations you get when you enter the Marines.

—William Varley, Bronx, N. Y.

Reply by Capt. F. W. Hopkins:—1. Examination for promotion in the N.C.O. grades may be oral or written and covers practical and theoretical work. I personally was made a corporal on an oral, and sergeant on a written competitive. It's more or less to the discretion of the board appointed.

2. "The Leatherneck", Marines' Magazine, 8th & Eye Sts., Washington, D. C., at $2.50 per year. A monthly magazine.

3. Horse Marines? Not at the moment. Companies were horse mounted in the West Indies some years ago, two of them. Detachments were mule mounted in the Nicaraguan campaign. Part of the Legation Guard at Pekin, China, is mounted, being provided with horses but on occasion are mounted on camels.

4. I believe if your parents consent and you are physically very fit, etc., you might be accepted before you are eighteen. Only way is to ask the officer at the recruiting station in New York.

5. Corporals get $36 per month, sergeants $54.

6. Inoculations? Typhoid shots, three each, a week apart, and one smallpox vaccination.

TROPICAL photography is a tough assignment.

Request:—This fall I am going on a trip by motor launch down the west coast of the United States and South America. I intend to take pictures for publication.

I have had some experience in photography, taking pictures, developing films, and a little printing, but I'm not sure what formulas would be best to use in a tropical climate, how to keep the films in good condition, etc. I would appreciate all information you can give me along these lines.

Also can you give any dope on an adequate outfit? I intend to take either a 4x5 or 5x7 Graflex with a 4.5 lens or faster, developing trays, graduate, etc. Unless I can buy a printer for very little money, or make one, I'll have to have the pictures printed elsewhere.

—Gene Lensmith, Dunning, Nebr.

Reply by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—I would not advise any American-built camera for use in a hot, humid climate like that of Central America; you need either an all-metal instrument, like the Leica or Contax, or else a camera specially built for tropical use, such as the Tropical Una, made by James A. Sinclair, 3 Whitehall, London S. W. 1, England. Or if you prefer the reflex type, the Adams Tropical Minex, made by A. Adams & Co., 122 Wigmore Street, Portman Square, London, W. 1, England.

Have your films individually packed in sealed tin boxes by the manufacturer; that is, each roll or each dozen by itself. Do not

open a box until immediately ready to load the films into the camera, expose as promptly as possible, and develop at once; even a few hours in the camera may ruin the films, in extreme conditions of heat and humidity. If you use cut films, develop and fix and wash in a Dallan tank, which permits all operations after loading to be carried out in daylight; if you use roll films, use a tank like the Perplex, in which the film is wound on a spiral reel, *without an apron.* You can get an inexpensive changing-bag, into which the films and tank are placed, the arms being inserted through light-tight sleeves; this makes it possible to load your camera magazine and your tank in daylight.

Write to the Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York, for their booklet on Tropical Development; this will give you full instructions for processing your films in the tropics.

I would not advise trying to print or enlarge your pictures en route; you are going to have tribulation enough anyway, without that; tropical work is about the most difficult and trying form of photography, so leave the printing till you get home.

You will very likely find a fungoid growth occurring on your lens and causing weak, foggy negatives. Remove this by moistening a piece of well-washed cotton (*not* linen) cloth with a mixture of equal parts of distilled water and pure grain alcohol, and rubbing gently. Do not soak the cloth, do not scrub hard, and take extreme care not to get any of the mixture on the edges of the lens, or it may soften the Canada balsam with which the elements are cemented, allowing them to separate. If this occurs, there is nothing to do but return the lens to the makers to be re-cemented.

Do not let anyone talk you into keeping your films to develop after you get home; it can't be done. I recently had a letter from a man who lost two hundred dozen exposures by trying to bring them from Indo-China to this country, undeveloped. It's a tough job, developing in the tropics, but it's the only way.

MICA mining in New Hampshire.

Request:—I have a mica schist deposit showing about sixty per cent mica. The mica being a very fine division, the remaining minerals are pyrite and quartz sandstone. Unfortunately some of the quartz is in the form of dust, making separation difficult.

I would appreciate any information that you could give me about a machine or any method or device to effect separation. In order to be of any value to me the finished product should weigh twenty-two pounds or less per cubic foot.

I am sending a small sample of the schist.

—L. H. Noyes, Whitefield, N. H.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—I judge your estimate of sixty per cent mica is very conservative. Under a common 2-lens mineral glass, it seems to be of higher mica content with only a few minute inclusions of pyrites scattered through it. It feels a bit gritty, which, as you say, is probably fine quartz sand.

Cleaning and separation is, of course, required, but should not present much of a problem. Air separation is usually employed for preparing ground mica from mica schist, when the mica is interlocked with other minerals. Where the mica is associated with quartz and other minerals such as the pyrites specks in your sample, a mechanical separation is necessary, and this may be accomplished through an application of pyroelectric methods; though this is highly technical and I haven't the process on file.

However, since the foreign minerals in your schist seem very fine grained, the air method may effect a clean separation. A description of a plant of this type is contained in an article by Toner Antisell under the title, "Mica Mining and Milling Methods," which came out in the Engineering & Mining Journal, Dec. 4th issue of 1926. Write them at 330 West 42nd St., New York City.

In general, the separation of mica schist requires elaborate equipment. Vanners, or other concentration tables, are used and the mica is floated off on the tailing side, with impurities discharging from the concentrate end. This apparent reversal is effected because of the flatness of mica particles, which causes it to float on the water. This method is comparatively inexpensive, needing only power for the table, plus water enough for the concentration. Of course, you'd need a crusher of some sort, although a set of rolls should be plenty if your schist is all like the sample I have. In fact, if you have plenty of water at fifty feet to one hundred feet head, you could operate crusher or rolls and table by a common bucket water wheel, the water being delivered to wheel from a twelve-inch pipe reduced at the wheel to take a small nozzle.

The only safe way to determine your separation method is through experimentation. Price of ground mica is higher than crude scrap, but in the latter case the latest quotation is $60 to $80 a ton, for white, ground mica, of 70-mesh fineness.

Better get the article on mica issued by the U. S. Bureau of Mines, Washington, D. C. Ask for "Information Circular No. 6044." It covers everything from mining to selling, including scrap mica, separation, dry and wet grinding, etc. Your state has been producing not far from fifty per cent of all the sheet mica of domestic output, and most of it comes from Cheshire and Grafton counties. I see you are up in Coos County, some miles north of the Grafton County line, while the mica mines are mostly around Rumney Depot and Dorchester in south-central Grafton County, with the northern limit for sheet stuff at Easton.

THE ratio in Madagascar is about twenty bearers to a one man safari.

Request:—I have for some time tried to find a connection in Madagascar where I could buy gem minerals (Beryl, Moonstone and Spodumene), but have been unsuccessful.

Could you give me any advice as to contacting some such person?

What are the average expenses there?

—Eugene H. Payne, M.D.,
Windsor, Colo.

Reply by Mr. Ralph Linton:—I cannot put you directly in touch with any firm there dealing with gem minerals. However, I know that there are several companies which handled these as a side line, and suggest that you write to the Chief of the Bureau of Mines, Tananarive, Madagascar.

I believe that all gem stones are still exported in the rough, there being no facilities for cutting on the island. In addition to the minerals you mention the island produces very fine garnets and iolites.

Expenses naturally vary with where you are on the island, especially whether in one of the larger towns or traveling. Fairly good hotels in the three largest towns charge about twenty francs a day, meals included. From this board and lodging scales down to about ten francs. Travel by bus and rail is very cheap, rates about one-third the present American ones for the same distances. Most important points on the island can be reached in this way. On safari living expenses are very small. The Government provides rest houses in all villages and five francs a day will cover all food except luxuries which you may take along. You will have to have your own cook, wages about one hundred and fifty francs a month, and an interpreter and general factotum, wages two hundred to two hundred and fifty francs a month. Price of bearers varies, but three francs a day would be a fair average. A one man safari usually requires about twenty to twenty-five. Bearers are hard to recruit without government aid. They dislike going more than three or four days' march from home and there is always some delay while new ones are being found.

HERE'S a man looking for sharks!

Request:—I am working on oils derived from fish, mainly the shark family, and I find the supply limited in the waters along the eastern and southern shores of the United States.

No doubt in your travels you have discovered localities where these fish can be caught in quantity and near enough to a landing spot upon which a shed may be erected so that carcasses may be stripped.

The area for this work does not have to be confined to one locality but to areas where these fish are so plentiful that the research work can be carried on without interruption.

I have heard that there are a number of ports in the British Malaya district, mainly Penang, also on the east coast of Sumatra where these fish are caught for the fins only, no thought given to the rest of the carcass.

Any general information that you may give me on these districts will be appreciated.

—R. B. Smith, Jersey City, N. J.

Reply by Mr. V. B. Windle:—There are plenty of sharks around Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. I have seen them caught by ships' crews from vessels at the wharves, between tides. While the Chinese favor the fins, sanitary laws would prohibit leaving the rest of the carcass on the beach.

You, no doubt, know more about sharks than I do, but insofar as Malaya is concerned I understand they avoid rough water. From May to October the Southwest Monsoon blows and thus the East Coast of Malaya has quiet water during this period. The Northeast Monsoon blows from October to May and the West Coast would be rather quiet.

On either coast you will find plenty of ports and little villages where you could carry on your work. You will find the country beautiful and the natives willing to help.

I suggest you see the British Consul nearest you for information regarding permits and other regulations.

If you make the venture do not choose your supplies, other than scientific, until you arrive at Singapore or Penang. Tropical clothing and other equipment can be purchased cheaper right on the ground and obviously be better suited for the country. The natives will insist on using their own equipment for catching sharks.

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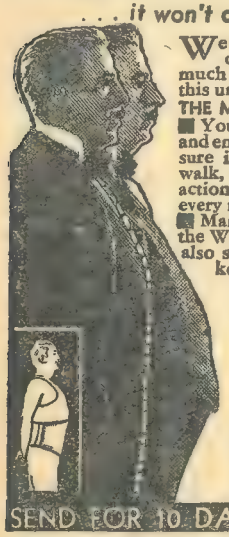

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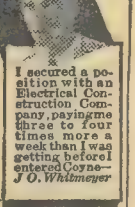

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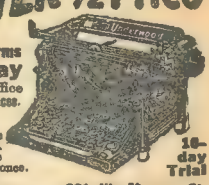

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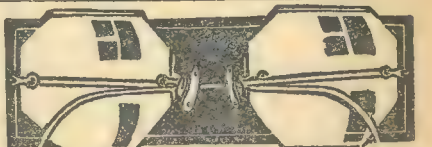

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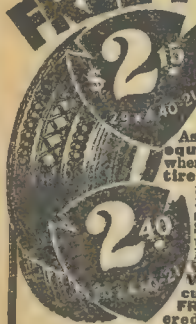

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29x4.75-20	2.50	.95
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.05
5.25-17	2.90	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.95	1.15
5.50-17	3.35	1.15
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.15
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.15
6.00-17	3.40	1.15
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.15
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.15
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.25
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.25
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32x4	2.95	.85	
33x4	2.95	.85	
34x4	3.25	.85	
32x4½	3.35	1.15	
33x4½	$3.45	$1.15	
34x4½	3.45	1.15	
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7.50-20	$6.95	3.75	
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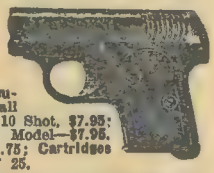

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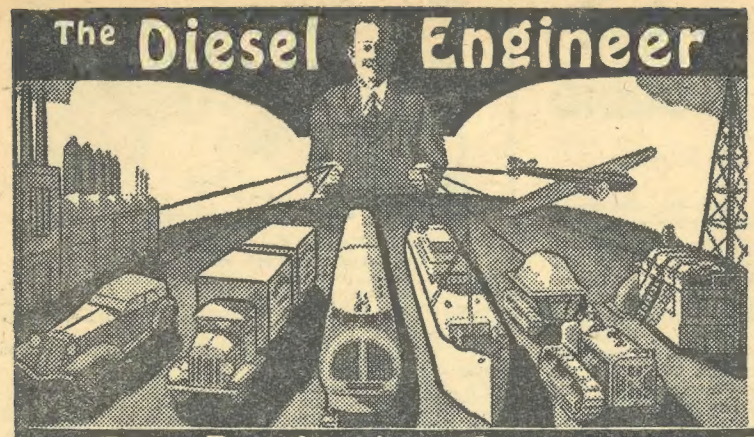
The Diesel Engineer



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